

**The role of consumer participation and engagement in influencing loyalty
and word-of-mouth: user generated brand communities.**



A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

by

MIN PRASAD BHANDARI

Department of Business Management

Abertay University, Dundee, United Kingdom

JANUARY 2018

Declaration

Candidate's declarations:

I, Min Prasad Bhandari, hereby certify that this thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), Abertay University, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. This work has not been submitted for any other qualification at any other academic institution.

Signed

Date.....

Supervisor's declaration:

I, Dr Gary Mulholland, hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution and Regulations appropriate for the degree of PhD in Abertay University and that the candidate is qualified to submit this thesis in application for that degree.

Signed.....

Date.....

Certificate of Approval

I certify that this is a true and accurate version of the thesis approved by the examiners, and that all relevant ordinance regulations have been fulfilled.

Supervisor.....

Date.....

Acknowledgements & Dedications

I would like to acknowledge, and express my warmest appreciation to, all the individuals who supported me throughout my research journey. This piece of work would not have been possible without their support and guidance.

Firstly, let me take this opportunity to extend my sincere gratitude to my supervisors, Dr Gary Mulholland and Dr Jason Turner, for their extensive guidance, inspiring confidence, and invaluable input and suggestions. I humbly appreciate their efforts and support during the toughest periods of my research, especially following my father's death, which encouraged and motivated me in my commitment to complete this research.

Secondly, I extend my appreciation to all my colleagues and support staff at the University of Abertay Dundee, and particularly those from Dundee Business School, who accepted me as a member of the university and who encouraged me, listened to me, and made suggestions on my research. In addition, my thanks go out to all the Facebook friends and other participants who completed my research questionnaire and interviews and gave their invaluable time to fill out the questionnaire and share their experiences of brand community experiences.

Thirdly, I want to acknowledge my brothers, Shanti Ram Bhandari, Nandi Keshar Bhandari, Hem Chandra Bhandari, Ram Prasad Bhandari, Dr Keshav Bhattarai, Subhash Bhandari and Santosh Koirala, who have been a source of focus during this research project. Likewise, I also wish to acknowledge my sisters-in-law, Rita Bhandari, Kabita Bhandari, Sanam Bhandari and Shephali Poudel, who were my emotional support and who kept my work grounded. Additionally, I want to acknowledge my lovely nieces; Shirsha, Sariyana, Anupa and Archana, and my nephews; Yogesh, Anup, Jigesh, Kabin, Aagaman, Aditya and Arush, who I could always count on to have smiles on their baby faces, which made me happy and kept me inspired.

Finally, I would like to bow down with respect and appreciation to my dad and mom; my wife, Sajan Pokhrel Bhandari; my mother-in-law, Sarita Pokhrel; and my two sons, Smayan and Mijash Bhandari, for being a source of motivation in completing this research work. My wife deserves all the appreciation for her never-tiring support, love and hard work, and the sacrifices made to make this research what it is now. I will be indebted and grateful to her forever. At the same time, my two boys provided me with motivation, laughter, and enjoyment, and most importantly, their love during the writing of this thesis.

Abstract

This research aims to investigate the role of consumer engagement in influencing loyalty and word-of-mouth through a user generated brand community on Facebook by collecting evidence from both quantitative and qualitative studies. A quantitative study is adopted to test the engagement dimension and its relationships with other constructs, such as participation, loyalty, and word-of-mouth, with a sample size of 551 collected among Facebook users in the UK. The empirical analysis from the quantitative data supports the ABC (i.e., affective, cognitive, and behavioural) dimensions of engagement as assumed in the study and finds a positive relationship between engagement, participation, loyalty, and word-of-mouth. Similarly, a qualitative study is adopted in the form of a semi-structured interview held with six user Apple brand champions from an Apple user generated online brand community on Facebook. A thematic analysis is conducted to analyse the engagement dimensions and their relationship to participation, loyalty, and word-of-mouth.

In addition, the application of both the methods (i.e., the quantitative and qualitative studies) to investigate the main aim helps the research to attain complementarity. The combination of both methods provides evidence to justify the engagement dimensions and their relation to participation, loyalty, and word-of-mouth. The quantitative study supports the argued engagement dimensions and their relationship with other constructs, whereas the qualitative study explores other components of engagement and their relationship with similar constructs, as well as helping to enhance the relationships and dimensions of engagement.

Moreover, this study contributes to marketing literature by empirically validating customer loyalty and word-of-mouth as outcomes of customer participation and engagement. No study so far has empirically investigated the effect of customer engagement on loyalty and word-of-mouth in a user-generated online brand community context. This enhanced understanding of vigour, personal identity, attention, absorption, sharing, and learning suggests that marketers should concentrate on the type of information presented, as well as the format in which information is presented outside the company's networks. Community markers, such as feelings, emotions, excitement, contribution, and interaction with peers, contribute significantly to engaging and influencing loyalty and word-of-mouth with both the brand community and the brand itself.

List of Tables

Table 1: Research approach by which to answer the research objective, derived from the main research aim.	38
Table 2: Relationship marketing before and after consumer engagement integration	45
Table 3: Definition, antecedents, and consequences of engagement.....	48
Table 4: Consumer engagement research review of brand communities	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table 5: Engagement dimensions review	51
Table 6: Comparison of online and offline brand communities	68
Table 7: Qualitative sources of data collection.....	112
Table 8: Relationship measures and scale items.....	133
Table 9: Demographic variables	137
Table 10: Quantitative survey participants' demographics (n=551)	140
Table 11: Results of factor loading.....	176
Table 12: Results of factor loading for the four constructs	180
Table 13: Correlations among the latent variables	182
Table 14: Hypothesis testing (H1, H2, H3, H4 and H5).....	186
Table 15: Interviewee profiles of the participants in this study.....	195
Table 16: Phases of thematic analysis	202
Table 17: Qualitative data coding table	205

List of Figures

Figure 1: Worldwide growth in social media use over the years.....	19
Figure 2: Most famous social network sites worldwide	20
Figure 3: Summary of the consumer engagement dimensions used in this study	59
Figure 4: Classifications of online brand communities	73
Figure 5: Apple online brand community structures	74
Figure 6: The relationship between participation and engagement	80
Figure 7: The relationship between engagement and loyalty	84
Figure 8: The relationship between engagement and word-of-mouth	87
Figure 9: The relationship between participation and word-of-mouth	89
Figure 10: The relationship between participation and loyalty	90
Figure 11: Consumer engagement theoretical model	93
Figure 12: The research process for this study	101
Figure 13: Quantitative survey (Facebook account).....	142
Figure 14: Quantitative survey (age)	143
Figure 15: Quantitative survey (gender)	144
Figure 16: Quantitative survey (country of residence)	144
Figure 17: Quantitative survey (ethnicity).....	145
Figure 18: Quantitative survey (education)	146
Figure 19: Quantitative survey (length of time as a Facebook member).....	147
Figure 20: Quantitative survey (time on Facebook)	148
Figure 21: Quantitative survey (activities on Facebook).....	149
Figure 22: Quantitative survey (number of brand communities).....	150
Figure 23: Quantitative survey (types of brand communities)	150
Figure 24: Quantitative survey (time spent on brand communities).....	151
Figure 25: Quantitative survey (length of experience with brand communities)	151
Figure 26: Quantitative survey (attention paid to the brand communities)	152
Figure 27: Quantitative survey (discretionary time spent in the brand communities).....	153
Figure 28: Quantitative survey (attention grabbed by anything in the brand communities)	153
Figure 29: Quantitative survey (I like to learn from the brand communities).....	154
Figure 30: Quantitative survey (intense experience with the brand communities)	154
Figure 31: Quantitative survey (learning information from the brand communities)	155
Figure 32: Quantitative survey (passion for the brand communities).....	155
Figure 33: Quantitative survey (engagement with the brand communities).....	156
Figure 34: Quantitative survey (reading wall posts in the online brand communities).....	157
Figure 35: Quantitative survey (reading fan comments in the online brand communities).....	157
Figure 36: Quantitative survey (responding to fan comments in the online brand communities)	158
Figure 37: Quantitative survey (watching videos in the online brand communities).....	158
Figure 38: Quantitative survey (posting comments in the online brand communities).....	159
Figure 39: Quantitative survey (playing games in the online brand communities).....	159
Figure 40: Quantitative survey (participation in the online brand communities).....	160
Figure 41: Quantitative survey (first choice)	161

Figure 42: Quantitative survey (prefer to use)	161
Figure 43: Quantitative survey (best offer)	162
Figure 44: Quantitative survey (prefer to buy)	162
Figure 45: Quantitative survey (high regard)	163
Figure 46: Quantitative survey (future purchase)	163
Figure 47: Quantitative survey (seeking products)	164
Figure 48: Quantitative survey (product offers)	165
Figure 49: Quantitative survey (increased loyalty)	165
Figure 50: Quantitative survey (pride)	166
Figure 51: Quantitative survey (recommending)	167
Figure 52: Quantitative survey (saying positive things)	167
Figure 53: Quantitative survey (speaking favorably)	168
Figure 54: Quantitative survey (increased word-of-mouth)	168
Figure 55: Global social networking use per day, in minutes, from 2012 -2017	173
Figure 56: Hypothesis testing (H1)	184
Figure 57: Hypothesis testing (H2)	184
Figure 58: Hypothesis testing (H3)	185
Figure 59: Hypothesis testing (H4)	185
Figure 60: Hypothesis testing (H5)	186
Figure 61: Engagement mediated relationship (model test).	187
Figure 62: Participation without engagement mediation (model test).	188
Figure 63: Qualitative data familiarization	203
Figure 64: Qualitative themes (mind mapping)	207
Figure 65: Integration of the quantitative and qualitative studies	224
Figure 66: The correlation between participation and engagement	227
Figure 67: The correlation between engagement and loyalty	232
Figure 68: The correlation between engagement and word-of-mouth	234
Figure 69: The classification table of main research question, objectives and sub research questions	237
Figure 70: The correlation between participation and word-of-mouth	254
Figure 71: The correlation between loyalty and word-of-mouth	257
Figure 72: Theoretical model test of the empirical results from the quantitative and qualitative studies	264
Figure 73: New conceptual model of consumer engagement from from this study	266

Table of Contents

Declaration.....	3
Certificate of Approval	3
Acknowledgements & Dedications.....	4
Abstract.....	5
Chapter One	13
1.1 Introduction.....	13
1.2 Background of the study	18
1.3 Online brand communities in social networks	22
1.4 The rationale of this study.....	33
1.5 Research aim and the objectives of this study	37
1.6 Organization of this thesis	39
Chapter Two.....	40
Literature Review.....	40
2.1 Introduction.....	40
2.2.1 Development of the engagement concept in relationship marketing studies	41
2.2.2 Engagement definitions	45
2.2.3 Consumer engagement literature on online brand communities.....	49
2.2.4 Consumer engagement dimensions.....	50
2.3.1 Affective engagement	54
2.3.3 Behavioural engagement.....	56
2.4.1 Summary of the choice of engagement dimensions in this study	58
2.5.1 Consumer behaviour study	60
2.5.2 Online consumer behaviour	60
2.6.1 Social influence theory in online brand community behaviour	61
2.7.1 Community and its background	62
2.7.2 Traditional brand communities and online brand communities.....	64
2.7.3 Classification of online communities.....	69
2.7.4 User and company sponsored communities.....	72
2.8.1 The relationship between participation, engagement, loyalty, and word-of-mouth and its consequences.....	76
2.8.2 Participation	76

2.8.3 Loyalty	80
2.8.4 Word-of-mouth	84
2.8.5 Participation and word-of-mouth	87
2.8.6 Participation and loyalty	89
2.9.1 Knowledge gap	91
2.10.1 Summary	93
Chapter Three.....	95
Research Methodology and Research Design.....	95
3.1 Philosophical assumptions and methodology	95
3.1.2 Ontology and human nature	96
3.1.3 Epistemology	98
3.1.4 Positivism.....	99
3.1.5 Phenomenological epistemology	99
3.2 Methodology	100
3.2.1 Quantitative research method.....	101
3.2.2 Quantitative data collection	102
3.2.3 Quantitative methods of data analysis.....	104
3.3.1 Qualitative Research Method.....	108
3.3.2 Qualitative data collection	111
3.4.1 Mixed method research as a methodology	114
3.4.2 Pragmatisms	114
3.5.1 Mixed methods research in this study	116
3.5.2 Analysing sub-research questions and methods.....	119
3.6.1 Mixed research approach as a research design	121
3.6.2 Parallel data collection and analysis	121
3.7.1 Quantitative method as a preferred method of data collection.....	122
3.8.1 Quantitative and qualitative data integration in this study	123
3.9.1 Reliability in quantitative and qualitative research	124
3.10.1 Validity in quantitative and qualitative research.....	125
3.10.2 Limitations of mixed research methods	127
3.11.1 Summary	127
Chapter 4.....	129
Quantitative Data Collection, Findings, and Analysis	129

4.1 Quantitative data collection procedures	129
4.1.1 Choice of sampling	129
4.1.2 Instrument development.....	132
4.1.3 Pilot study	132
4.1.4 Operationalization of variables	133
4.1.5 Measures of independent variables	135
4.1.6 Demographic Variables.....	137
4.2.1 Quantitative data findings	138
4.2.2 Data screening.....	138
4.2.3 Descriptive statistics and the measurement model.....	138
4.2.4 Introductory data analysis	139
4.2.5 Participants' characteristics.....	139
4.2.6 Participants' Facebook Use.....	140
4.2.7 Questionnaire responses, tables, and figures.....	141
4.8.1 Quantitative data analysis	169
4.8.2 Demographic features of participants	169
4.8.3 Confirmatory factor analysis.....	174
4.8.4 Result of the Structural Equation Model.....	182
4.9.1 Limitations of the quantitative study	188
4.10.1 Summary	189
Chapter 5.....	190
Qualitative Data Collection, Findings, and Analysis	190
5.1.1 Introduction.....	190
5.1.2 Sampling	190
5.1.3 Designing interview guides.....	192
5.1.4 Getting access to interviewees	195
5.1.5 Conducting interviews	197
5.2.1 Qualitative method of data analysis	199
5.2.2 Thematic Analysis	201
5.2.3 Familiarization with the data.....	203
5.2.4 Generating initial codes from the data	204
5.2.5 Searching for the themes	205
5.2.6 Defining and naming themes	207

5.2.7 Producing the report (writing up, discussion)	208
5.8 Limitations of the qualitative study	208
5.9.2 Participation as a main theme	210
5.9.3 Engagement as a main theme.....	213
5.9.5 Word-of-mouth	220
5.10 Summary	223
Chapter: 6.....	224
Integration of Empirical Findings (i.e., Quantitative and Qualitative Studies) and Discussion	224
6.1 Introduction.....	224
6.2 Discussion.....	236
6.3 Summary	266
Chapter 7	268
7.1 Conclusion	268
7.1.2 The academic contribution of this study	269
7.1.3 The marketing contribution of this study	271
7.2.1 Limitations and Future Research	273
References.....	275
Appendix: 1 Interview questions	309
Appendix: 2 Survey Questionnaire.....	310
Appendix: 3 Figure of main research question, objectives, and sub research questions.	320

Chapter One

1.1 Introduction

One of the world's largest consultancy firms (Forrester, 2015) predicted that brand communities would be the next big thing in the future, as data shows that US adults want more engagement with brand communities through different channels. Online brand communities have attracted marketers' interest because of the surge in Internet adoption. Online brand communities can be a very effective and efficient medium by which to generate collective knowledge and experiences across many other users in a short amount of time. As a result, marketers have started to prioritize online communities for brand development and to generate positive business results. Recent reports on the community business industry on social platforms (e.g., Facebook brand communities) provides evidence of growth, and investment in, such communities. For example, social business brand communities are expected to grow by 26% by 2019 and to become a \$23 billion industry, which is a higher level of growth than in the other technological big data industries (Hinchcliffe, 2016). Vanessa DiMauro, CEO of digital strategy consultancy Leader Networks and an expert on online communities, describes online communities as being an opportunity for businesses to enhance value (Goldberg and Koch, 2017). Likewise, the Customer Lifecycle Journey Report (2015) by Forrester Research suggests that almost 81% of companies have some form of online support community groups, which is a 14% increase compared with 2012 (Legget, 2016).

Nike and Coca Cola invested in creating their online communities through the teamcrafted.com online community, The Backplane, which also assisted Lady Gaga in creating the "Lady Gaga Playbook" online community (Forbes, 2014). The CEO of the company The Backplane, Matt Michelsen, suggested in his article in Forbes that such communities have been influencing consumers. In addition, Rahul Sachdev, CEO of Get Satisfaction, speaking in an interview with Di Mauro (2015), expressed the need for online brand communities, which act as a bridge by which to shorten the process of reaching the consumers and engage with the brand. Likewise, Joel

Spolsky, the CEO of Stack Overflow, says that their journey grew from a blog to there being 100 million visitors in their online community because they allow freedom of speech and members are free from trolling (Rosoff, 2016). On the other hand, Rachel Hope, the CEO of The Community Round Table, emphasizes the importance of the slow and steady nature of online communities in the beginning, when she says that “Online communities grow geometrically, they grow very slowly in absolute value initially but then pick up speed rapidly. Knowing what to expect helps quite a bit, and we’ve been doing a lot of work with clients to show month-over-month ROI and then projecting out into the future, so stakeholders can see what to expect and when—and how their investments pay off. This helps tremendously” (Anderson, 2017).

Similarly, reflecting on the growth of online communities, a report by the advisory firm IDC predicts that the value of online communities globally will rise by 24.3% by 2019, which indicates the influence and increasing dominance of online communities (Claveria, 2016). Brands have chosen to use online communities because of their reach and power to influence consumers very quickly. Similarly, according to Green Book Research Industry Trends reports for 2015, around 50% of market researchers adopt online communities for better understanding online consumers and around 34% have indicated their intention to use online communities for consumer behaviour research in online communities (Poynter, 2015). In addition, in an article for Forbes, Malin Liden, the Vice President of digital experience at SAP, emphasizes the importance of innovation and co-creation by explaining that brand communities are an essential component of future innovation through co-creation with the company (Liden, 2016).

Marketers’ interest in online communities

Marketers have placed a high importance on interactions taking place on social networking sites in recent years, in terms of engaging customers and building relationships with them (Shen et al., 2010).

Research shows that more than half the top 100 global brands have created online brand communities (Manchanda, Packard, & Pattabhitamaiah, 2012), which indicates that marketers want to embrace this digital change and invest in these communities of strangers. In addition, marketers’ investment in online brand communities has significantly increased the value of brands such as Starbucks Coffee, Procter & Gamble, Coca Cola, Pepsi, and Dell (Baldus, Voorhees, & Calantone, 2015). The consulting company Forrester emphasized the need for brands to focus on

their own online communities to create an advantage for consumers and brands in terms of higher interaction and engagement (Forrester, 2016). Forrester's emphasis on creating consumer brand communities is suggestive of the fact that marketers prioritize consumers' uninterrupted experiences and knowledge sharing, either with the company or among themselves. This is in comparison with brand pages created on social networking sites, on which the providers control and restrict users and brands in expressing their feelings, experiences, and ability to learn from each other. As a result, brands and users have shifted their attention to online brand communities on social networks or on webpages, such as Facebook brand communities, Google Plus communities, LinkedIn groups, and many others.

In addition, marketers are attracted to online communities because consumers in such communities are active participants, easily accessible, and the creators of insights, which can be useful for future brand innovation. A data analyst at Forrester Research explains in a blog the reasons behind marketers' prioritizing online brand communities: "Community members are easy to access and quick to respond—offering great opportunities in situations where immediate feedback is needed" (Arcand, 2015).

Moreover, online communities provide other consumers with 24/7 help through a customer service team or other online brand communities (e.g., brand forums, Facebook communities), which then give consumers different options by which to seek solutions to their problems. Companies can thus make savings on customer service because of the help offered by other community members. Focusing on the direct advantage of online communities, Sean Bryant, the Marketing Director at Inversoft, explains that companies can make a virtual world for consumers through online brand communities, where they can directly encourage their consumers and influence them towards their brands (Bryant, 2016).

A CRM expert with Forrester Research, Kate Leggett, says that, "Customers now sit in the driver's seat. They control the conversation." Understanding customers in this customer age is very important because they have empowered themselves by influencing other customers online and want to influence business decisions (Brownell, 2016). Therefore, companies want to build strong relationships with customers, and online customer communities can serve the purpose of engaging customers and creating purposeful relationships. Moreover, marketers believe that online communities have become an integral part of brands' successes in today's business world.

Academics' interest in online communities

The past decade has seen rich research interest being devoted to, and around, online brand communities (Habibi et al., 2014; Islam & Rahman, 2016c; Zhang & Luo, 2016). However, the engagement concept was introduced later in the last decade and, therefore, most of the existing research used in this topic area has emphasized two areas: first, customer participation in an online brand community, where the focus is on brand-related outcomes, and second, customers' interactions and their online behaviour with the community or platform with which they are involved.

Most recently, many academic researchers have emphasized the role of online brand communities in engaging customers and developing and strengthening customer relationships (Martinez-Lopez et al., 2017; Rialti, Riccardo, et al., 2017; Zhang & Luo, 2016; Dessart et al., 2015; Manchanda et al., 2015; Wirtz et al. 2013; Brodie., et al. 2013). Most of the world's biggest brands have developed brand communities on social media platforms, especially on Facebook, which have allowed them to advertise, promote, and communicate their offerings to their customers, as well as to engage them and to build long-term customer-firm relationships (Zaglia, 2013). Online brand communities have transferred brand dominance from companies to consumers, although marketers can still influence consumers to engage with such communities for higher positive outcomes (Weiger, W. H. & Hammerschmidt, M., 2017). Online brand communities have become an important source by which to understand consumer community behaviour because they share common goals while remaining heterogeneous e.g., various types of members, such as fans, advocates, learners, etc., (Özbölük, T.; Dursun, Y. 2017). Online brand communities have become marketing instruments, which help to nurture brands and enhance consumer loyalty (Hartmann et al., 2015).

Consumers' interest in online communities

Consumers have shown great interest in online communities, especially after user generated content came to feature in the Internet. Consumers have turned to online communities for many reasons. A Customer Lifecycle Journey report (2015) by Forrester Research suggests that adults' online forum/community use had grown to 56% in 2015, up 31% since 2012, and that adult users identified that their interest in online communities stemmed from the fact that they were able to share, help, and interact easily with other members in a group (Legget, 2016). Similarly, consumers

are turning to online communities so that they can meet likeminded individuals in terms of their brand use, thinking, or beliefs. Recent market research featured in the “2017 Global Online Report”, carried out by KPMG, provides the example of the MUJI.net community, which, through its online community, developed loyal consumers and differentiated itself from other brands in the same industry. Consumers frequently expressed their positive experiences with other consumers through the MUJI.net community, thus influencing loyalty for the brand (KPMG, 2017). In this sense, online communities are providing consumers with a platform on which to share their experiences and information, and to help and influence each other’s online behaviour, when it comes to a brand. Moreover, in the report on Community Value & Matrices (2017), consumers suggest the need for building advocative communities instead of company support portals to secure better relationship outcomes (Morand, 2017), as these portals allow consumers to participate, be involved, and to engage as a community and to share, endorse, and advocate brands and company activities. In addition, members of Apple’s support community suggested that the Apple brand community is very useful for them because Apple brand community members help each other by solving and sharing Apple product-related experiences in the Apple online brand community (Apple, 2017).

The main research aim of this thesis is to investigate the role of consumer engagement in influencing loyalty and word-of-mouth in user generated online brand communities using evidence from quantitative (i.e., questionnaire) and qualitative (i.e., interview) studies. At the beginning of the 21st century, especially after the arrival of user generated content features on the Internet, a huge amount of attention was paid to engagement and brand community research among both academics and marketers. Previous research on consumer engagement and brand communities centres on consumer engagement with company-initiated brand communities. However, in the marketing discipline, consumer engagement in user generated brand communities is still under-researched in connection to the dimensions of engagement and their relationship with other constructs, such as participation, loyalty, and word-of-mouth.

To sum up, marketers, consumers, and academics are very interested in the way consumers interact, share information, participate, and engage with their peers. Therefore, this research tries to address consumer engagement dimensions and their relationship outcomes in user generated brand communities by adopting a theoretical model and testing it with empirical results from

quantitative and qualitative studies. The lack of an empirically accepted model by which to explore its relationship and the outcomes of such relationships indicates the need for further empirical evidence, which this research tries to explore.

The mixed research method is favoured over the single research method in order that a triangulation can be achieved through empirical evidence. Thus, it will avoid the limitation of the single research method and present an overall dimension of engagement, as well as the interrelationships between other constructs and their interconnectedness.

This chapter sets out the background and need for the research, as section 1.2 discusses the background of the study; section 1.3 discusses social media, engagement, and the importance of online brand communities; section 1.4 explores the research problems; section 1.5 outlines the purpose of this study; and, finally, section 1.6 introduces the overall organization of this thesis.

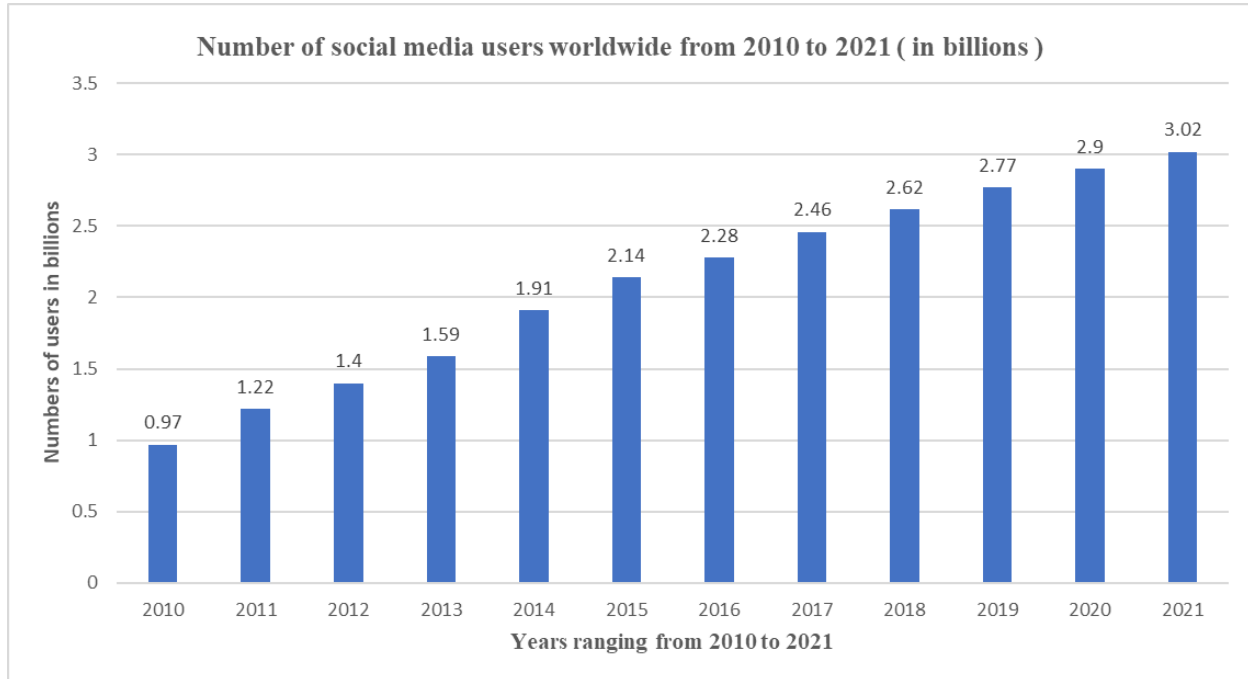
1.2 Background of the study

Social media, as defined by Kaplan & Haenlein (2010), is “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content.” One of its features is the integration of social and technological components which transformed nomological (i.e., one to many) communications into dialogic (i.e., many to many) communications among users, thus converting users from mere content readers into publishers and contributors. This has allowed social media to grow at a scorching speed. Today’s social media platforms allow users to participate in generating content and to communicate freely without a physical presence with a larger number of people or brands (Zhang, Guo, Hu, & Liu, 2017). It also enables huge numbers of people to engage in online learning and the sharing of information at the same time (Hur, Kim, Karatepe, & Lee, 2017).

The number of social media users is growing worldwide, and the number of users may reach around 2.77 billion daily users by 2019, which is an increase of more than 30 million from 2017 (2.46 billion users). In addition, social media users have the highest percentage of Internet penetration as, in 2017, almost 71% of Internet users are also social media users (<https://www.statista.com/statistics/278414/number-of-worldwide-social-network-users/>). It

should be noted that social networking sites, and Facebook, are one of the most popular platforms for engaging in social activities and that these have the highest user engagement rates.

Figure1: Worldwide social media growth over the years



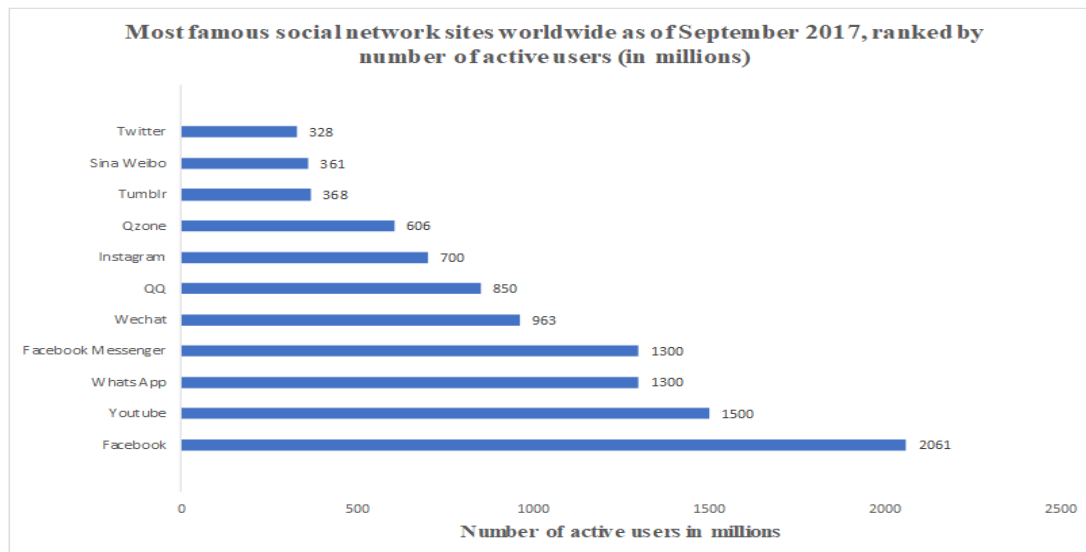
Source: Statista (2017)

One of the reasons for the popularity of social networks is that human beings are social by nature. The development of social media technology and the rapid increase in the popularity of social media sites in recent years took place after the arrival of the Internet, especially the Web 2.0 function, and the term “social media” started to be used in the early 2000s. The growing interest in social media advertising has led to high levels of attention being devoted to, and high levels of interactivity occurring in, online brand communities (Wu, 2016). Social media promotional campaigns could lead to business goals set by marketers being achieved through better customer experience, positive perceptions, awareness, knowledge, preferences, purchase intention, etc., (Duffet, 2015). Therefore, marketers are trying to utilize such social platforms and to allow members of such platforms to form communities to increase customer value—both desired and perceived—for their brands (Martinez-Lopez et al., 2016).

The reality is that today's digital forms of communication channels have their foundations in traditional Internet sources. In the early days of the Internet, there used be computer mediated communication, such as on bulletin board systems, user net newsgroups, and via email, which facilitated communication. One-to-one, one-to-many, and many-to-many are the ancestors of present social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc., (Lomborg, 2017).

One of the important aspects of social networking platforms is that they have empowered consumers, and marketers have started to treat customers as their partners while developing products, making decisions, and creating value (Hassan and Casalo, 2016), which, in turn, may encourage customers to engage with a brand. Users' attraction to, and marketers' prioritizing of, social media has helped social platforms to grow rapidly. Facebook, for example, had 2.07 billion monthly active users as of September 2017 and 1.74 billion mobile monthly active users as of January 2017 (<https://newsroom.fb.com/company-info/>). In addition, Facebook is the most famous social network site in the world and has 2,061 million active users, as is shown in the figure below.

Figure 1: Most famous social network sites worldwide



Source: Statista (2017)

In this digital era, individuals want to collect, discuss, interact, engage, and share information that is important to them and connect with as many people, brands, services, etc., as possible. Social media has become a contemporary tool for sharing, interacting with, and discussing information for both users and marketers and this process has evolved from participation to engagement, either

between consumers and brands or between consumers and consumers. In this regard, social media has altered the ways in which people communicate, collaborate, and connect with others, and marketers have recognized its great capability for connecting with other customers (Henning-Thrau et al., 2010). The interactive nature of social media has developed over the years in the form of user-generated content (i.e., Web 2.0) features. This is different from the static website era of Web 1.0 in that it allows for two-way interaction and co-creation and has brought about a dramatic change between consumers and brands in the digital sphere. It has allowed consumers to become active participants in creating brand activities among many other users (Gensler et al., 2013), thus leading to engagement and, finally, business outcomes in the form of profitability, satisfaction, loyalty, and word-of-mouth.

The effectiveness of social media platforms lies in the fact that they are structured around their users and that brands have the luxury of using users' interactions and interconnectedness with the wider community of users at a reasonably lower cost (Aichner & Jacob, 2015). There is an increased emphasis on social media from modern marketers, who claim that it is one of the most important promotional tools by which to communicate with their target audience (Harrigan et al., 2017; GAO & Feng, 2016). Social media platforms encourage users to participate and enter into the engagement process along with brands to generate positive business outcomes in the form of profitability, loyalty, trust, word-of-mouth, etc.

Moreover, marketers have turned towards social media because they recognize its significance as a marketing tool: a report shows that there are 2.80 billion global social media users and that the growth rate of the total number of users is more than 30 percent each year (Kemp, 2017). The recent quarterly report published by Facebook (2017) suggests that advertising revenues were \$9.16 billion in the second quarter of 2017, which is a 47% increase compared with the same quarter the previous year. As was the case in 2016, global social advertising revenues exceeded the combined advertising revenues of Disney, Comcast, Fox, and Time Warner (Forrester, 2017). Marketers believe that engaging with customers provides a unique competitive advantage: that is why they want to increase their presence, and to learn the most effective social tactics and the best ways to engage their audience through social media platforms. A report by Social Media Examiner (2017) suggests that at least 62% of marketers' plan on increasing their presence on Facebook and investing in the development and execution of social media marketing strategies. At least 91% wished to identify the best social media marketing techniques and mediums by which to engage

consumers through social networks and brand communities, and more than half of the marketers questioned (62%) chose Facebook as their most important platform. Similarly, a recent survey among marketers carried out by Pivot Conference (2017) suggests that social media is an integral part of their marketing campaign for brand success both now and in future. Emarketers' Social-commerce report (2018) suggests that consumers are flocking towards social platforms to inform their path to purchase. The fact that social media plays significant role in influencing consumers' path to purchase was also identified in the global report by PWC (2017), which found that online buyers/shoppers identified that social networks were the form of digital media that was most frequently used to inspire their purchase decisions. Organizations must focus on getting social media right, as research carried out by GlobalWebindex identifies that 93% of Internet users have at least one social media account (Econsultancy, 2017). Marketers want to tap into social media advertising through social media. Likewise, the consulting firm Gartner (2017), also suggests that 63% of CMOs rank social media investment as being a top priority area.

This is indicative of the shift that is taking place among marketers from traditional media advertising to digital interactive advertising. By using such social media channels, marketers want their consumers to hear their story and history, and to learn about brands, products, and services. Marketers also want to develop connections and with consumers through interaction and information-sharing to create value for both consumers and marketers.

1.3 Online brand communities in social networks

Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube are becoming fertile ground in which to develop online brand communities. Twitter has 328 million active monthly users as of the first quarter of 2017 (<https://about.twitter.com/company>). Similarly, LinkedIn has over 500 million members as of 2017 (<https://press.linkedin.com/about-linkedin>). Brands such as the Boston Red Sox, Salesforce.com, Starbucks Coffee, Dell, General Motors, and Procter & Gamble are making significant investments in social media platforms and encouraging online brand communities to cultivate stronger relationships with their consumers (Baldus et al., 2014).

Easy access to social media has enabled consumers to choose products of their choice through online brand communities. On the other hand, as social media use increases, there is an increase

in consumers' expectation of brands. A report by Mickens (2015) on how marketers should react to this suggests that over half of consumers now anticipate brand responses to consumers' comments. Social media can be a useful tool for customers in helping them in their purchase decision-making process. The social media marketing environment is as interactive and chaotic as a game of pinball and it can result in purchase or no purchase and positive or negative brand attitudes in real time. One of the reasons for this unpredictability is the power of customer opinion sharing that the customer possesses because of the large network of social media and user generated content capability (Kohli, C., Suri, R., & Kapoor, A., 2015). As a result, it has been noticeably observed that companies are increasingly becoming actively involved in social media and investing in creating brand communities as a means of accelerating or influencing consumer behaviour through these communities (Chen, C. W., & Lien, N. H., 2017).

Customer engagement has become a hot topic in marketing circles because of digitalization and the emergence of social media channels (Nelson-Field & Taylor, 2012). Discussions are taking place among academics and marketers in the form of conferences, seminars, and research papers on customer engagement and its importance and challenges (Vivek et al., 2014). The rise of interactive features in digital media has brought about shifts in one-way communication, in the form of advertisements or television, and even in the Internet's two-way communication, between firms and customers (Deighton & Kornfeld, 2009). Social media has enabled firms, as well as customers, to share information on a real-time basis with each other via online brand communities (Chen et al., 2010). Users can spontaneously join brand communities they like via social networking sites and they can engage with these communities by participating in conversations and by sharing their experiences with the brand, and by commenting on videos, photos, etc., (Wang, 2016).

Engagement can be the level of interaction that individual consumers have, either directly or indirectly, with a company or brand over time (Smith, 2014). Marketers find customer participation to be the first step before they reach the engagement zone. The term "engagement" includes some features of participation. It is defined as comprising the collective interactions that take place along the customer journey with the brand or brand communities through different touch points before, during, or after transaction, no matter whether they occur through the phone, social networking sites, physical stores, online community members, offline, etc. Such activities directly or indirectly reinforce consumer engagement and extend the value a customer has for a company

(Forrester, 2016; Kumar et al., 2016; Marketing Science Institute, 2010; Rehaman et al., 2016). Consumer engagement can generate value even if there is no purchase, because customers' psychological motivations towards brands influence large numbers of individuals who intend to buy from the brand. In addition, customers can generate both transactional and no transactional value beyond purchase because of the motivation customers have for a brand (Kumar et al., 2010; Vivek et al., 2014). Such behavioural dimensions can be manifested in word-of-mouth by individuals referring products to friends and community members, or by collaborating with other customers by solving brand-related questions in community discussions (Brodie, Hollebeek, Juris, & Ilic, 2011). This can help to generate value for both the parties involved in the process, such as consumers and brands. For example, members of the Apple brand community help each other by solving problems and sharing Apple product-related experiences in the online brand community (Apple, 2017).

It is very important to realize that engagement is a proactive concept and that customers can enter the process even before brands do. Brands should not have to wait for customers to act before they engage; rather, they can create an environment in which customers can engage with each other and reach out to others to inspire purchases, develop brand positivity, provide positive feedback, and gather information. The idea of making customers engaged involves making them familiar with the brand and developing some emotional, psychological, and behavioural attachment to products and services (Verint, 2014). At IBM's Amplify Conference in San Diego (2015), IBM executive Deepak Advani cited the example of Starbucks to reinforce the fact that they engage in a customer centric approach of customer engagement: Starbucks is not in the coffee business serving people, but rather in people's business serving coffee (IBM Amplify, 2015). Customer engagement programs can provide fundamental bases for companies changing transactional customers into loyal customers. Loyal customers have low emotional bonds with the company but a rational bond (Sashi, 2012); thus, competitors cannot attract them easily. Consulting company Gartner, Inc. writes that, "An actively engaged consumer is more willing to participate with the organization through multiple different channels, ranging from online self-service tools or a mobile application to community participation or user group involvement. They are more willing to provide feedback when asked, make best use of the products or services on offer, and make suggestions on how to improve them" (Gartner, 2015). Consumer engagement can be a game changer because the more engaged customers are, the greater the likelihood is that they will spend money on a company's

products and serve as advocates for its brands. By engaging customers effectively, companies can gain a competitive advantage, increase customer loyalty, and enhance revenue.

In terms of relationships with brands, online brand communities are classified as being user-initiated and organization initiated (Porter, 2004). User-initiated communities are founded and administered by users, whereas company-initiated communities are founded and administered by companies. The notion that customers of brands can organize themselves into a community is a new business idea, although the same concept was termed “customer community” until the 1980s. Even in the early days of the high-tech era in the mid-1990s, it was not easy to recognize customers as being a group of people until they interacted each other; rather, they were fragmented groups of individuals. The arrival of the commercial Internet brought a new concept known as customer experience and the beginning of the new era, during which customer communities transformed into brand communities (Greenburg, 2016).

Muniz & O’Guinn (2001) were the first to redefine brand communities in the changed Internet-based scenario as being “specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relationships among admirer of a brand.” Online brand communities provide quite a different social interaction than that found on social media platforms, such as Facebook. Interactions do not take place between you and your relative or neighbour, do not involve chatting about your son and grandson’s handsome pictures on Facebook, and they are not focussed on discussing your favourite celebrity news. Instead, these users have come to chat with the community to ask some questions, share their experiences, give feedback, or offer some ideas about the brands they are part of (Greenburg, 2016), which differentiates their interactions from traditional brand communities. A brand community provides customers with a platform to express their opinions about firms, and choices about products and services that firms offer; hence, marketers give high priority to such community interactions. A brand community is a collective of people with a shared interest in a specific brand who create a subculture around the brand with its own values, myths, hierarchy, rituals, and vocabulary (Cova & Pace, 2006).

Marketers have placed a high importance on interactions taking place on social networking sites in recent years that engage customers and build relationships with them (Shen et al., 2010). Research shows that more than half the top 100 global brands have created online brand communities (Manchanda, Packard, & Pattabhitamaiah, 2012), which indicates the fact that marketers want to adopt this digital change and invest in these communities of strangers. In

addition, marketers' investment in online brand communities has significantly increased the value of brands such as Starbucks Coffee, Procter & Gamble, Coca Cola, Pepsi, and Dell (Baldus, Voorhees, & Calantone, 2015). Facebook is one of the most popular social networking sites on which various brands have created communities. Since content found in such communities plays a crucial role in engagement, companies have been conscious of this aspect and have invested time and money on it. For example, General Motors has invested \$30 million in generating content for its Facebook online community and plans to continue doing so in the future, which reinforces the importance of online communities for the company.

Different companies have different goals for creating brand communities on Facebook. Some want to reach larger numbers of users as a proof of their existence, while others want to develop relationships. In most of the cases, companies want to build long-term relationships with customers by facilitating communication between firms, their customers, and brand communities as part of a marketing investment made by firms to build relationships (De Valck, Van Bruggen, & Wierenga, 2009; Zaglia, 2013; Chen, C. W., & Lien, N. H., 2017). Brands are now being discussed and deselected on Facebook, Twitter, and even on Instagram. The story generated by companies is being undermined and changed by consumers. The truth of the matter is that companies no longer drive brand messages, but consumers do. Consumers and potential consumers are interacting with companies in different ways across multiple touch points. Today's consumers are empowered, proactive, and don't wait for marketers to respond to them; rather, they themselves interact and engage to form opinions and influence each other.

The concept of community was revived and reborn after the arrival of the Internet, and especially after the mid-90s. Formerly, communities were defined by a physical location, whereas the Internet created cyber communities where location was not a limitation. This became even broader after the Internet evolved into a social version that allowed users to establish virtual communities so that they could integrate and adapt, regardless of physical distance. In addition, online communities can help to strengthen offline communities, as evidenced by the fact that communities related to brands got stronger with the arrival of online brand communities (Martinez-Lopez, Francisco J., et al., 2017).

There are two tendencies in online communities. First, there is the tendency that community members have consumption activity as their reason for joining the community. In this situation, the online community is known as consumption community and it is made up of a group of

individuals “held together through shared emotions, styles of life, new moral beliefs, senses of injustice and consumption practices” (Cova, 1997, p. 301). Consumption communities were a very popular approach when the Internet was in its early stages and when members were still attached to local community groups and had a lower commitment to online group activities. Second, there is the tendency that, when a brand becomes the focal point of community members, the online community is termed as being a brand community. This represents “an enduring, self-selected group of consumers, who accept and recognize bonds of membership with each other and the brand” (Veloutsou & Moutinho, 2009, p. 316). Online brand communities flourished after a worldwide excess of them came to exist through social media platforms. They allowed consumers to interact and share what they thought, how they found products, and what they wanted to see when it came to their loved brands in future (Trusov et al., 2009; Zhu et al., 2016). The amount of power such community members have nowadays, in terms of communication and interaction, has made marketers feel the need to adapt to this new situation, as doing so enhances brand awareness (Barreda et al., 2015), increases positive word-of-mouth (Wang et al., 2016), stabilizes customer brand loyalty (Zheng et al., 2015), and enables companies to achieve competitive advantages in their marketing activities. Marketers are using and promoting online brand communities more now to avoid consumers’ current resistance to traditional marketing programs based on traditional media (Martinez-Lopez et al., 2017).

Oliver argues that a person becomes loyal in a cognitive fashion at first, then reaches affective loyalty, which is followed by cognitive loyalty. Finally, the person becomes loyal in action. Cognitive loyalty is the first stage of Oliver’s loyalty framework and relates to the perceivable qualities and features of a certain brand that indicate that it is more advantageous and desirable than other alternatives. This stage is called cognitive loyalty or loyalty based on brand image. Cognition can be based upon previous or second-hand information, or recent experience of a brand. This stage is simply information based. After all, this form of loyalty is very superficial. When a brand is used routinely and does not cause any satisfaction, the extent of the consumer’s loyalty is nothing more than performance. When the consumer gets satisfaction from using a certain brand, it becomes part of the consumer’s experience and takes on emotional or affective manifestations (Oliver, 1999). Affective loyalty is the second stage of loyalty and, as Oliver (1999) states, it is a kind of attachment or attitude to the brand that is based on pleasant experiences of using the brand. The consumer’s commitment to the brand at this stage is called emotional loyalty, which takes the

form of cognition and affection in the consumer's mind. While cognition can be easily affected by new information, feelings of affection are hard to change. Nevertheless, this form of loyalty – just like cognitive loyalty – is vulnerable to shifting to another brand (Oliver, 1999).

As a result, marketers must try to attract more committed consumers (Oliver, 1999). Cognitive loyalty, as Oliver (1999) believes, is the next stage in the sequential framework of loyalty and it is the cognitive stage of loyalty intentions. This stage is achieved after the repeated formation of positive feelings toward a brand. Cognitive loyalty is defined as being a kind of commitment or plan to purchase from a certain brand again. Consistent with this definition, it is possible to regard cognitive loyalty as being a state of loyalty in which a deep commitment to purchasing from a certain brand exists. However, as is the case for many other instances of determination, such a commitment may never lead to action, although it is expected (Oliver, 1999). The final stage is action loyalty. In this stage of loyalty, the intention created in the previous stage turns into a greater willingness to act. Oliver (1999) states that the consumer is ready to overcome possible obstacles to use certain products or services and to interact with their desired brand. In this stage, action is considered as being the ultimate outcome of a readiness to act and overcome obstacles (Oliver, 1999).

Improving customer engagement can strengthen customer loyalty, increase a customer's lifetime value, and improve and solidify brand perceptions. It is thus no surprise that companies invest a lot of time and effort in trying to engage their audiences (Gartner, 2017). Marketers have realized the benefits of social media initiatives and the potential advantages of brand communities. Many marketing managers have made significant investments in building brand communities based on social media (Habibi, M. R., Laroche, M., & Richard, M. O., 2016). The quality and relevance of brand communities increased because of a revolution in the digital era, as many people took to the Internet, which was available around the globe and resulted in higher user participation on social media platforms (Gordon et al., 2015). Many marketers are aware of the importance of such social media platforms and have established, invested in, and maintained online brand communities on such platforms in order that they can become successful in their social media brand strategy.

Online brand communities can present both opportunity and risk as the concept is new, untested, and a relatively new marketing approach. In addition, it is organized around social networks and the technology allows people to connect with many others at a time. Marketers feel very optimistic about this and they are curious to know how they can generate value for their business both today

and tomorrow by using social media as a marketing tool in online brand communities. Social media has given marketers a means of direct interaction, which constitutes an ideal environment for creating brand communities (Scarpi, 2010). In addition, online communities fill the gap of collectivization, which was missing in traditional brand communities (Schouten & McAlexander, 1995). This form of online culture is also greatly influencing business, and marketers are spending their time and money on this form of interaction (Ganley & Lampe, 2009), which is becoming the norm in most cases.

Previous research has already hinted that this social web is bringing about significant changes to old marketing strategies: the research carried out by McAlexander, Schouten, & Koeing (2002) suggests that brand communities influence customer relationships between brands and customers. In addition, research carried out by Algesheimer, Dholakia, & Herman (2005) suggested that brands have changed their attitudes towards online communities and adopted them as an instrument by which to establish strong and enduring relationships with customers. An online brand community (OBC) is a necessary platform for companies to improve their differentiation and competitive position, which allows them to strengthen their relationships with customers and involve them in brand co-creation (Tsai et al., 2012). Online communities before were simply there as a text forum on which customers could share their thoughts and questions about a brand. Online communities have now developed into a strategic marketing investment and they can also provide unique brand experiences. The interactive digital environment and increasing amount of consumer participation in online platforms allows for interactions with other consumers and with brands (Kelley & Alden, 2016). Companies today see customers as being their business partners when it comes to developing products, making decisions, defending the brand and, in general, increasing customer value so that they can become more engaged with brands (Hassan & Casalo, 2016). Engaged customers are also more likely to be actively involved in word-of-mouth activities in online brand communities.

Online communities and forums were a very dominant force before social networking sites became popular. The latter allowed individuals to interact, share information, experiences, and collaborate with each other. However, with the popularity of social networks (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, and many more), online communities have again been revived through company websites or have been embedded (Casas, 2017). The question is now: Why are these online communities so important

once again? The truth of the matter is that brands are struggling to achieve the reach and exposure they desire to have with their fans and followers through social networking pages on social networks. In addition, because of the restrictions and rules in place, brand pages cannot make their members actively participate in online and brand created activities (Forrester, 2016).

Online communities allow consumers to connect with each other and to enjoy the many benefits of being part of such a large community; one that is open to worldwide consumers with no physical boundaries. However, to be part of this process, brands must invest significant amounts in their marketing activities. Nevertheless, brands have already invested in such communities. For example, Nike, Adidas, and General Motors have invested significantly in creating brand communities (Barkholz & Rechten, 2012; Forrester, 2016). By using and promoting online brand communities through social networks, companies manage to avoid current consumer resistance to traditional marketing programs based on traditional media (Martinez-Lopez et al., 2017). Marketing professionals are making a great effort to understand how to create and maintain communities to increase customer value, which can lead to positive word-of-mouth and loyalty towards their brand. Some companies have already invested much money, time, and resources in creating content and establishing their online brand communities in the marketplace. The furniture retailer, Made, which is known as “Made Unboxed”, connects previous customers with undecided buyers and thereby seeks to inspire those who cannot visit a showroom in person (<https://www.made.com/unboxed/#/all/>). Likewise, Lego Ideas users find and submit ideas for new designs and get their Lego ideas selected by the votes of community members (<https://ideas.lego.com/dashboard>). In the online brand community for PlayStation, users compete to win trophies online (<http://community.eu.playstation.com/t5/English-Forums/ct-p/55>). Similarly, in the online community for Beauty Talk, users share beauty tips, advice, reviews, etc., (Econsultancy, 2017).

Each brand community has its own purpose. User initiated online brand communities are created by the admirers of a brand and these are mostly formed on social network platforms, where they take the form of a relationship-oriented brand community (e.g., Facebook brand communities). Likewise, users with the same interests can come together in a community (e.g., Ford forum, Apple community, etc.), users with the same transaction experiences can come together to share their consumption experiences (e.g., ebay.com), and users can share virtual experiences in virtual

communities online (e.g., Second Life). However, for marketers, knowing such communities' behaviour towards brands and their brand-related outcomes are the main purpose. Therefore, marketers' investment in brand communities is intended to develop long-term connections with their current and potential consumers (Zaglia, 2013).

The past decade has seen rich research interest being focussed on, and around, online brand communities (Habibi et al., 2014; Islam & Rahman, 2016c; Zhang & Luo, 2016). However, the engagement concept was introduced later in the last decade and, therefore, most of the existing research used in this topic area has emphasized it in two areas: first, customer participation in an online brand community where the focus is on brand-related outcomes and, second, customers' interactions and their online behaviour with the community or the platform with which they are involved.

Most recently, many academic researchers have emphasized the role of online brand communities in engaging customers and developing and strengthening customer relationships (Martinez-Lopez et al., 2017; Rialti, Riccardo, et al., 2017; Zhang & Luo, 2016; Dessart et al., 2015; Manchanda et al., 2015; Wirtz et al. 2013; Brodie., et al. 2013). Most of the world's biggest brands have encouraged participation in brand communities on social media platforms, which has allowed them to advertise, promote, and communicate their offerings to their customers, as well as engaging them to build long-term customer-firm relationships (Zaglia, 2013). Company-initiated communities have a business orientation, whereas user generated communities have personal and professional orientations among the users, who may be complete strangers. However, the reach and magnitude of their influence is as effective that of company-initiated brand communities. There needs more focus on engagement in user generated brand communities. User generated online brand communities do not have any business orientation or goals. Such communities are the result of brand love, care, and admiration. Members of these communities look for similar users who share the same feelings, relationships, and emotions. Likewise, users exercise a higher spontaneity of expression, identify with other members more closely, form a closer attachment with the group creator(s), and have a higher level of involvement and participation with the communities. Such activities are very important for marketers to identify consumers' past, present, and future shopping behaviours, their attitude, loyalty, and word-of-mouth activities both online and offline.

Companies have commercial objectives for creating an official brand community. They want to develop a relationship with consumers to create value for the company as well as its consumers. However, companies do not have control over consumer-initiated brand communities on social media platforms, such as the Apple brand community initiated by its users. Users unite to develop a social relationship and, by becoming involved and engaging in brand communities with other members, they intensify their influence, which may result in increased engagement, participation, loyalty, and word-of-mouth – which the companies may not notice. However, previous researchers and marketers have paid more attention to company generated online brand communities (Gruner, Homburg, & Lukas, 2014; Wirtz et al., 2013), whereas consumer generated brand communities are still under explored (Jang et al., 2008; Shang et al., 2006; Martinez-Lopez et al., 2017). This study explores how consumers participate and engage in user generated online brand communities.

Although the market has been witness to the comprehensive acceptance of online brand communities and the quest of marketers for engaging customers is growing every day, there is no sufficient academic literature available regarding what components of engagement motivate customers to increasingly connect via online brand communities (Baldus et al., 2015). Marketers must have a clear customer understanding of the dimensions of participation and engagement in these brand communities, and their relationship outcomes on both attitudinal and financial loyalty to the brand, in order that they can experience business outcomes, such as loyalty, word-of-mouth, advocacy, and return on investment generated from online brand communities. Consumers' behaviour and attitudes in the development of practical aspects, such as real-time response, quality of content, and interaction, etc., are a crucial means by which to realize the richness of such interactions and knowledge and experience-sharing among consumers in online brand communities. Consumers' brand-related communication among large numbers of customers, time spent, attention given, and feelings expressed in online brand communities are very important means by which to explore the drivers of consumer engagement (Brodie et al., 2013; Baldus et al., 2015). However, consumer engagement in consumer-initiated brand communities is under researched.

Marketing literature from both academics and practitioners accepts the fact that there is a need for more research on customer engagement in online brand communities (Brodie et al., 2013; Hollebeek et al., 2014; Dessart et al., 2015; Habibi et al., 2014; Islam & Rahman, 2016c; Zhang

& Luo, 2016). The need for more research is reinforced by the call for scholarly attention and publications on customer engagement by the Marketing Science Institute (MSI, 2014).

Over the past few years, the customer engagement concept has been researched frequently in relation to online brand communities. The concept has achieved a high level of importance among researchers and marketers (Dessart et al., 2015; Rialti, Riccardo, et al., 2017; Zhang & Luo, 2016), but the empirical evidence in this field needs more exploration (Brodie et al., 2013; Harmeling et al., 2017; Martinez-Lopez et al., 2017; Vivek et al., 2014).

In addition to this justified need for further exploration of this issue, research on the motivations of customer engagement in online brand communities has not kept pace with the ever-changing situation of the industry (Brodie et al., 2013). Previous studies have also emphasized that there is a need to examine brand community characteristics and how they influence customer engagement (Brodie et al., 2013; De Valck et al., 2009), because brand community characteristics represent the kind of feelings that consumers have for the brand community. Some research demonstrates that there is a positive association between online brand community characteristics, commitment, and brand awareness (Barreda et al., 2015; Jang et al., 2008). Hence, it is important to understand brand community characteristics and how these are related to customer engagement. However, research on how online brand community characteristics may lead to customer engagement is lacking (Kang et al., 2016). The notion that customers of brands can organize themselves into a community is a new business idea, even though the same concept was termed “customer community” until the 1980s. Even in the early days of the high-tech era in the mid-1990s, it was not easy to recognize customers as being a group of people as, until they interacted each other, they were fragmented groups of individuals. The arrival of the commercial internet brought with it a new concept known as “customer experience” and the beginning of the new era in which customer communities transformed into brand communities (Greenburg, 2016).

1.4 The rationale of this study

The population of Internet users is growing at a rapid speed. The influence of Internet adoption has been such that it has been able to generate positive effects and has caught the interest of academics, companies, and consumers because of its influence on relationship behaviour. Academic research on consumer engagement behaviour between consumers in online brand communities needs more explanation and study (Islam and Rahman, 2016c; Zhang & Luo, 2016;

Fournier & Lee, 2009; Dessart et al., 2015; Vivek et al., 2014; Kumar et al., 2016), as the focus of existing research has been on consumers and brand interactions.

The effects of online community interactions have become significant for marketers because of the cost, reach, insights, and innovation that consumers produce in such communities (Forrester, 2015). Moreover, understanding consumer behaviour in online brand communities can provide companies with the competitive edge and positive business outcomes that they are looking for by making the consumer engaged with their brands and products.

Consumers are flocking to such communities and groups because they are looking for independent social interactions with like-minded people, in which they can share, interact, learn, and help each other outside companies' restrictions and rules. A recent consumer online behaviour report by Forrester (2016) suggests that consumers intend to interact more with their fellow users in online communities than the company itself.

Despite its practical importance, customer engagement in the context of social networking platforms and online brand communities needs more exploration and investigation. However, it is a fact that individuals in virtual communities have both social and business value related reasons for engaging. However, there is still a lack of academic and empirical evidence to explain how individual participation and engagement affects consumers' loyalty and word-of-mouth behaviour in the online community context. Empirical investigations on this topic need more justification as the research is far behind the times (Hollebeek, 2011a; Brodie et al., 2013; Islam & Rahman, 2016). One of the several reasons for the unpredictability of behaviour on social platforms is that every activity and its adoption in the virtual world is so quick and context dependent that research always remains behind; this is therefore the reason why it has not matured and why further exploration is needed (Ngai, Tao, & Moon, 2015). Previous research has also illustrated that users of social networking sites connect with like-minded people in a community and interact, ask questions, share experiences, and offer help about the focal object – for example, a brand, community, etc., (Koh & Kim, 2004; Dessart et al., 2015; Vivek, 2014; Rehaman et al., 2016). As a result, companies' social media marketing efforts on social platforms and networking sites, such as Facebook, have become critical for developing future relationships and encouraging consumer participation and engagement for anticipated business-related outcomes, such as loyalty and word-

of-mouth (Martinez-Lopez et al., 2017; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010). Marketers must understand the fact that consumers' participation and engagement with brands, services or communities varies according to the context and their choice of activities. Brodie et al., (2011a) illustrate that customer engagement has cognitive, emotional, and behavioural dimensions and that each aspect of engagement has a different outcome according to the context (i.e., offline, or online) and level of engagement with the object (i.e., brand or community). Marketers must understand these engagement dimensions and the process of engagement in both online and offline contexts as, when the context changes, so does the consumer engagement behaviour.

However, as mentioned above, because the virtual environment is so fast-changing and complex, it is very difficult to generalize a "one case fits all" approach and, therefore, further exploration and explanation is required in the case of the focus on engagement in brand communities. Marketers who have recognized that this change has occurred in the business environment because of the arrival of virtual communities have become popular and have used virtual platforms as a useful marketing tool in their consumer engagement efforts (WARC, 2016a). For example, the behavioural measures of engagement in the context of online brand communities, such as likes, comments, and numbers of fans, does not fully account for the cognitive and affective characteristics of consumers and, therefore, one aspect of engagement provides little information relevant to the desired business outcome for marketers in the social media context (Nelson-Field & Taylor, 2012).

However, previous research on consumer relationships and behaviour in the virtual context suggests that a positive consumer relationship provides an increased positive effect on consumer engagement and leads to positive consumer behaviour and brand performance in the form of advocacy, loyalty, and buying behaviour (Gambetti & Graffigna, 2010; Brodie et al., 2011). The interesting thing to note is that marketers are increasingly attracted to this because it is more cost effective to retain existing customers than to secure a new customer. In this scenario, it is extremely important to understand existing customers and their motivation to take part in customer brand engagement on online social media platforms, which may help businesses to capitalize on enhancing customer relationships, word-of-mouth, and loyalty to social media. One of the main objectives for marketers is to engage customers (Dessart et al., 2015) because of the positive effect of customer engagement on consumers' behaviour and business outcomes (Brodie et al., 2011a,

2011b). Hence, engagement is a topic of great interest that is worthy of further explanation and discussion by both academic and marketers (Vivek, et al., 2014).

As mentioned above, engagement is context-dependent and can be manifested in different forms that still require more research (Dessart et al., 2015). This is because there is no uniformity in its definition: some researchers focus on psychological processes, while others focus on behavioural processes. For example, Brodie et al., (2011a, p. 260) define consumer engagement as a “psychological state that occurs by interactive, co-creative experiences with a focal agent/ object (i.e., a brand) in a focal service relationship”. Similarly, Bowden (2009, p. 65) defines it as psychological process that leads to loyalty. These two definitions share a common emphasis on examining the engagement construct from a psychological point of view. However, Van Doorn et al., (2010) define engagement from a behavioural perspective as being “behavioural manifestations that have a brand or firm focus, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers”. This study uses Brodie et al., (2013)’s latest definitions of engagement as a multi-dimensional concept, which encompasses the affective, behavioural, and cognitive aspects of human behaviour in the online community context.

The arrival of digital media in the form of user generated content (i.e., Web 2.0) functions, and social media platforms, has transformed the pattern from traditional one-way (i.e., consumers to brand) communication to two-way communications (i.e., consumers to consumers and consumers to brands). Unlike traditional consumers, consumers today are not passive recipients of information but are very proactive users who initiate conversations with companies, their peers, and other stakeholders. This new form of communication and information-sharing between consumers can develop into connection and help to enhance business results, such as commitment, loyalty, word-of-mouth, etc., through different communication channels, especially social network platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, and so on.

Brand communities have been given much attention since there are players in the market known as community members who are consumers and who can have a great impact on business outcomes (Brodie et al., 2011b) through their participation and engagement (Algesheimer et al., 2005; Schau et al., 2009), although this issue needs further empirical explanation. The Marketing Science Institute (MSI) considers customer engagement as being an area deserving of significant scholarly

attention (MSI, 2010). MSI has also emphasized the need for exploration of this concept in its recent research priorities list of 2014–2016 (MSI, 2014). In addition to the practical need for further exploration, customer engagement in the context of online brand communities needs more exploration and investigation (Fournier & Lee, 2009; Dessart et al., 2015; Vivek et al., 2017) in terms of its relationship with other constructs, such as participation, and consequences, such as loyalty and word-of-mouth. Hence, further research is required on the following issues: a) Dimensions of customer engagement in user generated brand communities, and b) Relationships between participation, engagement, loyalty, and word-of-mouth in user generated online brand communities.

The next chapter discusses these two objectives in detail by referring to extant literature on relationship marketing and consumer behaviour theories from the online brand community perspective. The power shift to consumers is happening with rapid speed, along with changes in the sophisticated digital and virtual environment, and marketers want to track consumers' behaviour, the characteristics of their participation, and engagement in the virtual environment so that they can identify the most effective marketing communication platform through which to enhance consumers' participation and engagement with their brands. One of the growing platforms for such activities are online brand communities on social networking sites, such as Facebook. Hence, marketers want to know about, and give high priority to, the constituents of consumers' participation and engagement that motivate them to remain loyal and spread word-of-mouth and which provide the desired business results for marketers. Although marketers and academics have placed a high importance on these relationship concepts in the online brand community context, more explanation is required regarding the dimensions and their relationships with other concepts such as participation, engagement, word-of-mouth, loyalty etc. An empirical justification of, and more research on, such concepts is required, especially in the online brand community context.

1.5 Research aim and the objectives of this study

Academics and marketers, because of there being insufficient empirical evidence on consumers' engagement behaviour, are struggling to understand what constitutes engagement and how its relationship with other constructs, such as participation, loyalty, and word-of-mouth results for the

brands through online brand communities. Exploring consumer engagement dimensions in depth enables academics and marketers to better recognize and anticipate consumer behaviour in online brand communities. Therefore, reinvestigating the dimensions of engagement and reanalysing their interconnectedness and consequences in relation to other relationship constructs in a complicated online brand community would provide insights on consumer engagement behaviour in this new under-explored territory. Therefore, this study aims to explore:

The role of consumer engagement in influencing loyalty and word-of-mouth in user generated online brand communities.

Moreover, this study has developed two research objectives by which to investigate the main research aim, which are as follows:

1) To explain the dimensions of engagement in user generated online brand communities.

2) To analyse the direct and indirect relationships between engagement and participation, and their consequences, such as loyalty and word-of-mouth, in online brand communities.

Table 1: Research approach by which to answer the research objectives, derived from the main research aim

Knowledge gaps	Objectives	Addressing Gaps
Lack of uniformity in engagement dimensions in online brand communities.	Proposing multi-dimensional (i.e., affective, cognitive, behavioral) characteristics of engagement in online brand communities.	Case study interviews conducted with users (i.e., Apple brand champions), and analysis of consumer behavior and social influence theory in online brand communities.

Lack of empirical results for relationship outcomes between participation, loyalty, engagement, and word-of-mouth in online brand communities.	To develop a theoretical engagement model, test these relationships, and propose a new conceptual model.	Critical literature review and empirical results from mixed research (i.e., quantitative, and qualitative) study.
--	--	---

1.6 Organization of this thesis

This thesis is structured in seven chapters in which each chapter provides details of the different stages of this research. The first section introduces the background of this study, which sets up the background scenario for the problem and establishes the need for research in this subject area by making detailed statements. The second chapter reviews the literature on engagement dimensions, brand communities in the online environment, and provides a theoretical basis for these two concepts from the relationship marketing and consumer behaviour perspective. The chapter then moves on to analyse the interrelationships between the constructs of participation, engagement, loyalty, and word-of-mouth as antecedents and outcomes of engagement relationships, and generates five hypotheses to be tested in this study. Finally, the second chapter concludes by presenting a theoretical model of consumer engagement by which to test participation as an antecedent, and to test loyalty and word-of-mouth as consequences of consumer engagement in online brand communities. Chapter 3 introduces the philosophical understanding of the present reality and outlines the methodological choices adopted for this research. This chapter also justifies the sampling techniques, data collection methods, and processes, along with detailing the process of developing the questionnaire and generating the interview questions used in the quantitative and qualitative studies carried out in this research. Chapter 4 focuses on the quantitative data findings and carries out an analysis of the data findings using structural equation modelling, while Chapter 5 focuses on the qualitative data findings and carries out an analysis using thematic analysis. Chapter 6 combines both the discussion of the data findings with an analysis that references to the main research purpose of this study. The final chapter in this thesis is the conclusion, which focuses on the contributions of this study, its limitations, and identifies directions for future research.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter has introduced the background for the study and has outlined current problems and the need to carry out research in consumer engagement and its relationship with participation, loyalty, and word-of-mouth in user generated online brand communities.

This chapter provides an organized literature review on the dimensions of consumer engagement, the antecedents of engagement and their consequences in brand communities, and, finally, engagement's relationships with participation, loyalty, and word-of-mouth. Moreover, this chapter plans to address in detail the two research objectives of this study, which are:

- *To explore the dimensions of customer engagement in online brand communities.*
- *To analyse the relationship between participation, engagement, loyalty, and word-of-mouth in online brand communities.*

This chapter is structured in four sections. The first section defines the concept of engagement and its theoretical basis in relationship marketing. In addition, engagement literature on brand community is reviewed, which is followed by an analysis of the dimensions of engagement and choice of multidimensional components of engagement for theoretical model development and analysis. Next, the discussion will review the work of leading authors on engagement as a multi-dimensional concept (e.g., Brodie et al., 2013; Hollebeek et al., 2016; Vivek et al., 2012) and as a single behavioural dimension (e.g., Vandoorn et al., 2010). This is followed a discussion of by the choice of working definitions of engagement, which are defined by Brodie et.al., (2013) as being “a psychological state that occurs by interactive, co-creative experiences with focal agent /object (e.g. a brand community) in focal service relationship and a multidimensional concept subject to a context and stakeholder-specific expression of relevant cognitive, emotional and behavioural dimensions”.

The second section begins by discussing consumer behaviour and social influence theory, followed by a discussion of community and brand community characteristics and classifications. This section finishes with a discussion of the differences between company-initiated online brand communities and user generated online brand communities (e.g., Fans of Apple on Facebook). The third section analyses how engagement and participation are related to positive relationship

outcomes, such as loyalty and word-of-mouth, by referring to current literature. This is followed by a discussion of the current knowledge gap in terms of the lack of empirical evidence for such relationships in the online brand community context. The fourth and final section produces a theoretical model to test how the relationships between engagement, participation, loyalty, and word-of-mouth influence each other in online brand communities.

2.2.1 Development of the engagement concept in relationship marketing studies

Involvement is regarded as being an important component that enables customer relationships (Beatty, Kahle, & Humer, 1988). Involvement seems like engagement, but the literature argues an apparent distinction between the two concepts. Involvement, considered as a key facet of engagement, is defined as the “perceived relevance of the object based on inherent needs, values, and interests” (Zaichkowsky, 1985, 342). It is distinct from engagement on several different grounds: It requires a consumption object; it is not an active relationship (Mollen & Wilson, 2010); and it is based on cognition, affection, or motivation (Smith & Godbey, 1991), but not on behaviour (Zaichkowsky, 1985). Engagement is cognitive, emotional, and behavioural in nature (Brodie et al., 2011; Hollebeek et al., 2011a, 2011b).

Customer engagement has been one of the most widely discussed topics in the social media era. The revolution in the virtual world is well justified by the fact that marketers and academics believe that social networking platforms allow and support customers to delve into the deeper level of their engagement-related activities, which helps them to develop a more intense relationship with the brand, leading to greater consumer loyalty (Nelson-Field & Taylor, 2012; Kumar et al., 2016). Customer participation and engagement are an integral part of social media activities and there is a belief that brands must create an environment for consumers not only to participate in, but also to engage in, to benefit from social platforms (Vivek et al., 2014) as well as virtual brand communities. However, the relationship outcome benefit from participation and engagement does not have a very strong link. As relationships in the virtual environment change quickly, customers demand reasons to participate in brand activities: social media platforms serve this purpose by allowing community engagement (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Malthouse et al., 2014).

Content is one of the important aspects of social media use if it can fit the needs of the customer, as it can change customers' participating actions into them engaging with the brand or community through clicks, reactions, and responses to brand-related activities such as messages, events, etc. (Forrester, 2016). Consumer engagement can be initiated in the form of participation, such as consumers posting a comment or sharing a story, or when customers have some attitudes towards a brand and these translate into frequent interactions (Nelson-Field & Taylor, 2012). It is obvious that customer engagement with brand communities has become a crucial marketing strategy, as customers' positive journey through participation can be steps in the process that leads towards engagement. Hence, customer engagement with brands and their communities has become crucial for every firm's marketing strategy, regardless of how consumers engage and how marketers want to measure (Dessart et al., 2015) their engagement outcomes. In addition, engaged consumers share the brands' message and advocate for the brands passionately by appointing themselves as brand ambassadors both offline, online, or among brand community members on the Internet or on other social media platforms. Many marketers, however, struggle to engage customers across all these channels and devices, and to provide consistent, contextual, and personalized communication (Forrester, 2014). Marketers must involve themselves in a rich customer interaction and communication process, provide a 24/7 service, and to train employees to create content that has a faster process for answering customers' questions in the online context. In addition, marketers must handle the brand community as independently as possible, which can lead to higher satisfaction and positive business outcomes, such as loyalty, satisfaction, word-of-mouth, and enhanced performance and revenue (Malthouse et al., 2014, 2016).

The basis of engagement (i.e., customer engagement or consumer engagement) lies in the theory of relationship marketing (Ashley, Noble, Donthu, & Lemon, 2011; Vivek, Beatty, & Morgan, 2014; Malthouse et al., 2016) and the new service-dominant logic developed by Vargo & Lusch (Brodie et al., 2011; Hollebeek, 2011a). The purpose of marketing has changed over the years from creating new customers to keeping customers. The concept of relationship marketing has brought about this change (Buttle, 1996), whereby more attention is paid to customer retention. This has initiated a shift from product-centric organizations to customer-centric organizations, which has been one of the most discussed issues among researchers for a long time (Day, 1999).

In the past, marketing was based on the exchange of products and services between organizations and consumers, where the information travelled from organizations to consumers and influenced the consumer exchanging value between organization and consumers (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). In other words, organizations managed the relationship with their consumers by controlling information about goods and services in the relationship, in which consumers played a passive role as the recipients of value (Deshpande, 1983). Contrary to the traditional relationship marketing perspective, consumer engagement allowed consumers to enter the communication and value creation process. Although engagement is a proactive relationship concept, the components of traditional relationship marketing theory, such as repeat purchase, consumer retention, loyalty, etc., are the basis of its functionality (Hollebeek, 2011a; Vivek et al., 2014) in today's context. Consumer engagement emerged after the introduction of service-dominant logic, which emphasizes the functional aspect of engagement objects connected in a network (e.g., companies, customers, other parties, and community members) where together they help each other to co-create value (Hollebeek et al., 2016). In service dominant logic, Vargo & Lusch (2004, 2008, 2016) argue that four of the hypotheses among ten reinforce customer engagement. A customer is “always a co-creator of value, a service-cantered view is inherently customer-oriented and relational, all social and economic actors are resource integrators and value is always uniquely and phenomenally determined by the beneficiary proposed by the service-dominant logic”. The four premises mentioned above provide the functional base for engagement because they focus on customer interactions, co-creation of value between consumers and other stakeholders, and their connection to the service relationship (Brodie et al., 2013).

However, customer engagement needs an even broader perspective in the relationship context, in which communities of consumers and customers' past, present, and future behaviour with the brand only is not sufficient to justify engagement with the community and groups. Here, consumers' engagement with community members is related to “specific interactive consumer experiences” (Brodie et al., 2013, p. 106). Hence, in terms of customer engagement in the context of relationship marketing, a broader understanding of the interactions between engagement objects, such as companies, networks, communities, groups, and potential consumers, is required (Vivek et al., 2012).

Social engagement begins when users' personal identities translate into group identity. Personal identity is one of the components of affective engagement, as it is related to personal value; that

is, a feeling directed towards certain objects and a gaining of insight into one's self (Clader et al., 2016). In addition, personal identity relating to community identity encourages engagement, which results in future purchase intentions in an online brand community (Islam, Rahman, & Hollebeek, 2017). Engagement includes several emotional components, such as a sense of identification, shared values, and other emotional elements, which are qualities that engaged consumers possess (Albert et al., 2012). Brands try to create and communicate certain characteristics of brand so that consumers can incorporate the components of the brand into their identity (Kuenzel & Halliday, 2008). Brands allow individuals to align their behaviour and develop their identities in line with the features provided by the brands (Tuskej, Golob, & Podnar, 2011) and to infuse individuals with the brand's identity (Albert et al., 2012).

Consumer brand identification has its roots in social identity theory (Tuskej et al., 2011). Social identity theory refers to the characteristics of connectedness with a group and the feeling of oneness that can exist within a group (Ashforth & Mael, 1989); this feeling of connectedness is a perception of the individuals who belong to a group in either a real or a symbolic sense (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Bergami and Bagozzi (2000) have identified three cognitive elements of social identity; namely, group knowledge, evaluation (i.e., positive, and negative feelings for group members), and emotion (i.e., involvement with the group). The emotional component of identity is defined as being the affective component of engagement and consumers' experiences; established norms and values shared about brands define social identity in the context of brand communities (Zhou, Zhang, Su, & Zhou, 2012). One can therefore say that, in this case, the brand is at the centre of consumers' identification process.

Likewise, the traditional concept of relationship marketing's focus was exchange-centric, whereas the broader and newer concept of relationship marketing emphasizes an experience-centric approach (Vivek et al., 2014). In the experience-centric approach, customer experience is a fundamentally important value in the process of co-creation. In addition, co-creation is not limited to customers and brands/companies; rather, it is the experience shared from customers to customers and other stakeholders in a specific context-related relationship. Therefore, the concept has a theoretical basis in relationship marketing and a functional basis in service dominant logic, which has become pattern in the marketing system's definition of customer engagement (Vivek et al., 2014).

Table 2: Relationship marketing before and after consumer engagement integration

Relationship marketing research before consumer engagement adoption		Relationship marketing research after consumer engagement adoption
Focus	Customer–brand relationships (i.e., retaining customers)	Value through co-creation among customers and potential customer communities, as well as organizational networks, acquisition, and the retention of consumers
Creation of value	Through the exchange of goods and services	Using experiences of, existing or potential customers, and the process of co-creation and phenomenology
Interaction	Initiated by brands/companies	Initiated by existing or potential customers, potential customers, and potential companies and brands
Outcome	Exchange-centric	Experience-centric (i.e., the exchange is determined by the type of experience)

Source: Morgan and Hunt (1994), Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2000, 2003, 2004), and Vargo and Lusch (2004, 2008, 2016)

2.2.2 Engagement definitions

The word “engagement” carries very diverse and vast meanings. The word “engage,” as defined in the Oxford English Dictionary (2017), means “involve,” “bind,” or “participate,” and so on. Further meanings of the term are described in the literature as “connection,” “emotional involvement,” and “attachment” (London, Downey, & Mace, 2007). The engagement construct has been researched in different disciplines, including sociology (Morimoto & Friedland, 2013), psychology (Garczynski et al., 2013), educational psychology (Saveanu & Saveanu, 2012), organizational behaviour (Kataria et al., 2013), and marketing (Brodie et al., 2013; Hollebeek, 2014; Vivek et al., 2012). Engagement has been frequently used with other similar terms in the marketing research carried out by various authors. Brodie et al., (2011a) use the term “consumer engagement”, Sprott et al., (2009) use the term “brand engagement”, and most others use the term “customer engagement” (Gummerus et al., 2012; Vivek et al., 2014).

In marketing, Vivek et al., (2012), Brodie et al., (2013), and Hollebeek et al., (2016) define engagement as the intensity of an individual’s participation in, and connection with, an organizational activity, which either the customer or the organization initiate. They state that

customer engagement may be manifested cognitively, affectively, behaviourally, or socially. Likewise, Brodie et al., (2013) define customer engagement as:

a psychological state that occurs by interactive, co-creative experiences with focal agent/object (e.g. a brand and community) in focal service relationship and a multidimensional concept subject to a context and stakeholder-specific expression of relevant cognitive, emotional, and behavioural dimensions.

This multi-dimensional definition used by Brodie and his colleagues is the basis of the definition used in this research to define engagement from a multidimensional perspective in the online brand community environment.

Hollebeek et al., (2016) define engagement as a consumer's positively valenced brand-related cognitive, emotional, and behavioural activity during or related to focal consumer/brand interactions' and propose that it has three dimensions: cognitive processing, affection, and activation.

In information systems, the concept of engagement is defined as the intensity of customers' participation with both representatives of the organization and with other customers in a co-creative process involving the exchange of information and knowledge (Wagner & Majchrzak, 2007; Braojos, 2017). Similarly, in management literature, Noland & Philips (2010) and Andriof et al., (2017) discuss it as being a type of interaction that involves the recognition of, and respect for, common humanity and the ways in which the actions of the individual may affect others. In psychology, the concept of engagement in the 1990s was focused on work, role, and employment as a state of mind, which affects behaviour (Kahn, 1990; Garczynski et al., 2013). In sociology, Andrews & Williams (2008) and Morimoto & Friedland (2013) focus on the behavioural and active participatory aspect of engagement. In education literature, Robinson & Hullinger (2008) and Schwartz et al., (2017) define student engagement from a multidimensional viewpoint and consider it to involve active and collaborative learning, participation, involvement, and feeling legitimized. Political science considers engagement to be an iterative process focused on generating political behaviour, such as voting (Resnick, 2001; Morales et al., 2016).

Considered from the marketers' perspective, Evans & McKee (2010), Harden & Heyman (2009), and Solis (2010) define engagement as a freedom of customer participation, whereas Greenburg (2016) defines customer engagement as comprising the perceptions that customers have of their interactions with an organization, which is offered by the company. Similarly, Atherley (2011)

defines engagement as active participation in which consumers respond to, and create, conversations and discussions and interact with other consumers and companies. Likewise, Hootsuite (2017) defines engagement from a behavioural perspective, as customers can initiate direct interaction with the brand either from their own, or from brand's, side. Customer engagement takes place when they participate in the form of downloading, reading, watching, listening, commenting, responding, providing feedback; offering opinions on the company's posts and other users' posts; and accepting invites to events on social networks.

Malthouse et al., (2014) suggest a psychological perspective of engagement and suggest that organizations should involve themselves in enriching customers' interaction process, empowering their work force, and improving their processes and employee culture to benefit from higher customer satisfaction, thereby minimizing business risk and operating costs, and enhancing performance and revenue.

On the other hand, Thunderhead (2017) describes engagement from a value-related perspective and defines conscious involvement as:

an on-going, value driven relationship between a customer and a business, which is consciously motivated according to the customer's reasons and choices.

The Advertising Research Foundation includes an affective component to engagement, which is defined as "turning a prospect to a brand" (Meskauskas, 2006, p. 1). Similarly, Gallup (2016) argues that a customer's emotional or psychological attachment to a brand, product, or company is a definitive predictor of business growth. On the other hand, Mollen & Wilson (2010, p. 919) consider engagement to be "an outcome of repeated interactions that strengthen the emotional, psychological, or physical investment a customer has in a brand".

Smith (2014) states that engagement results from creating a moment that matters for a customer, such as meaningful content/messages, which cause them to develop a passion for the brand and makes them become involved with, and participate in, the company. Gambetti et al., (2012) state that marketers emphasize the importance of relationships among consumers and those between them and their social context. Online communication (e.g., Web 2.0 and social media tools) allow consumers in a brand community to express affective responses and to co-create experiences. Vide Wave (2016), referring to Rex Briggs, the CEO Marketing Evolution, argues that "Engagement is a state of consumer behaviour with advertising to predict future sales or other

positive marketing outcomes”, while the Advertising Research Foundation (ARF) describes engagement in terms of a mental activation process (ARF, 2006). Mental activation starts where engagement begins and, depending on the meaning perceived by the consumer, develops via the process of co-creation (ARF, 2006). According to this definition, engagement starts via cognitive means (i.e., a mental process or activation) and manifests itself in behaviour. Marketers look at Customer Engagement from the perspective of the organization (Vivek et al., 2012) and define it as comprising the activities that facilitate “repeated interactions that strengthen the emotional, psychological or physical investment a customer has in a brand” (Sadly, 2010, p. 7). This study uses Brodie et al., (2013)’s multi-dimensional definitions of engagement. Table two defines the engagement concept and its consequences in accordance with recent marketing literature.

Table 3: Definition, antecedents, and consequences of engagement

Authors	Methodology	Definitions	Antecedents	Consequences
Brodie et al., (2011)	Conceptual	Psychological state	Involvement, participation,	Customer satisfaction, loyalty
Brodie et al., (2013)	Empirical	Interactive experiences between consumers and the brand and/or other community members.	Triggers initiating engagement	Loyalty and satisfaction
Bowden (2009)	Conceptual	Psychological process leading to loyalty	Loyalty and satisfaction	Loyalty and satisfaction
Calder et al., (2016)	Empirical	“A behavioral manifestation toward the brand or firm that goes beyond transactions”		Purchase intention, attitude towards the brand
Gummerus et al., (2012)	Empirical	Multilevel construct		Loyalty and satisfaction
Higgins and Scholer (2009)	Empirical	Engagement is a state of being involved, occupied, fully absorbed, or engrossed in something	Hedonic properties need satisfaction	Brand loyalty
Hollebeek (2011)	Conceptual	“Customer brand engagement is cognitive, emotional and behavioral activity in direct brand interactions.”	Interactivity, rapport, involvement, trust	Loyalty
Patterson et al., (2006)	Conceptual	Level of a customer’s various “presences” in their relationship with the organization.		Satisfaction, word-of-mouth
Roberts and Alpert (2010)	Conceptual	Emotional and cognitive presence	Customer value	Increase in trust, loyalty

Vivek et al., (2012)	Empirical	CE may be manifested cognitively, affectively, behaviorally, or socially	Involvement, customer participation	Participation, word-of-mouth, loyalty,
Wirtz et al., (2013)	Conceptual	OBC engagement refers to the positive influence of consumers' identifying with an OBC	Social and functional drivers	Satisfaction, loyalty
Kumar and Pansari (2016)	Empirical	Attitude, behavior	Customer purchases	Loyalty, word-of-mouth
Hollebeek et al., (2016)	Empirical	Cognitive, emotional, behavioral	Customer knowledge-sharing	Loyalty

2.2.3 Consumer engagement literature on online brand communities

The focal object of engagement in the previous literature has been either consumers and brands (i.e., goods or services), or organizations or firms, whereas consumer communities have received little attention (Algesheimer et al., 2005; Wirtz et al., 2013; Dessart et al., 2015; Hollebeek, 2011a; Islam & Rahman, 2016). Therefore, this research uses the concept of engagement as identical to consumer engagement and its definition, as used by Brodie et al., (2011), who define it as being “a psychological state that occurs through interactive, co-creative consumer experiences with a focal agent/object” (Brodie et al., 2011a, p. 2). Although subject to various interpretations, consumer engagement is often understood as being a motivational construct of varying intensity. It involves an object (i.e., a brand or brand community) and a subject (i.e., the consumer) (Brodie et al., 2011a; Hollebeek & Chen, 2014). However, the focal object of engagement has always been a brand in previous studies. Moreover, the extant literature (Algesheimer et al., 2005; Wirtz et al., 2013; Gummerus et al., 2012; Kuo & Feng, 2013; Habibi et al., 2014; Gambetti & Graffigna, 2010; Brodie et al., 2013; Baldus et al., 2015) focuses on the brand community's relationship with the brand or company. However, the literature demands that more research be carried out on engagement in relation to brand communities in user generated brand communities and their influence on business outcomes.

2.2.4 Consumer engagement dimensions

The dimensions of engagement vary within the extant academic literature. Most of the literature on engagement focuses on different dimensions of engagement. However, most of the research agrees that participation precedes engagement in almost all disciplines and that the activation of engagement begins with the participatory activities of individuals and results in loyalty and word-of-mouth activities, especially in relationship marketing. These range from a unidimensional perspective of engagement (that being cognition, affect, or behaviour) to a multidimensional perspective of engagement that encompasses cognitive, affective, and/or behavioural aspects. Engagement, as discussed in marketing literature, ranges from a single to a multidimensional concept. Van Doorn et al., (2010) consider engagement to be a behaviour manifested toward a brand (i.e., word-of-mouth, recommendations, writing reviews, blogging, and helping other customers) that goes beyond purchase and results from motivational drivers. Kumar et al., (2010) support Van Doorn et al., (2010)'s conceptualization, but argue that purchases should also be included in the definition of engagement. On the other hand, Bijmolt et al., (2010) are more specific and focus on three key behavioural manifestations of engagement—namely, WOM, co-creation, and complaining behaviour—and claim that the manifestations of these can occur at different stages of the customer life cycle (i.e., acquisitions, development, and retention).

Similarly, The Marketing Science Institution (2013) describes customer engagement as being a manifestation of client behaviour toward the brand or the company “beyond the purchase” (MSI, 2013). Pham and Avenet (2009) view engagement as a cognitive construct and suggest that engagement “seems to be inferred from a pattern of action or withdrawal with respect to a target object (i.e., brand).” Academics, after realizing the complexity of engagement in marketing, defined engagement from multidimensional perspectives; that is, from cognitive and affective perspectives. Higgins and Scholer (2009) define engagement as “a consumer’s cognitive state (i.e., involved, occupied, fully absorbed, and engrossed) towards something that generates a level of attraction or repulsion (i.e., affective feeling) for the engagement object (i.e., brand).” Bowden, (2009) considers engagement to be the underpinning of loyalty, which is a psychological process (i.e., both cognitive and affective) resulting in satisfaction and loyalty.

Some research analyses discuss the engagement dimensions by linking them to identity, vigour, intrinsic motivation, and absorption (Patterson et al., 2006; Calder et al., 2013). Similarly, some

researchers identify a behavioural dimension that is like Van Doorn et al., (2010)'s, while others emphasize a multi-dimensional characteristic (Brodie et al., 2011a). Hence, there is no consensus about consumer dimensions even though so much research has been devoted to them; thus, a good platform has been created that supports the need for further research. There are various engagement dimensions suggested by the previous research and much work has been published on them as well (Brodie et al., 2011a; Brodie et al., 2011b; Hollebeek, 2011; Hollebeek et al., 2014; Hollebeek & Chen, 2014). Previous research defines engagement as being a multidimensional concept with cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions. My study also follows the same approach of customer engagement in line with Mollen & Wilson (2010), Wirtz et al., (2013), and Brodie et al., (2013).

Table 4: Engagement dimensions review

	Absorption	Affective	Behavioural	Civic	Cognitive	Dedication	Emotional	Identity	Interaction	Commitment	Social	Utilitarian	Vigor	Motivational
Patterson et al., (2006)	√					√			√					√
Sprott Czellar and Spangenberg (2009)			√				√							
Kumar et al., (2010)			√				√							
Mollen and Wilson (2010)		√			√									
Van Doorn et al., (2010)			√											
Verhoef et al., (2010)			√											
Brodie et al., (2011a, 2011b, 2013)		√	√		√		√			√				

Hollebeek (2011)		√	√		√		√			√				
Gummerus et al., (2012)			√		√									
Hollebeek (2013)		√	√		√									
So et al., (2012)		√	√		√									
Vivek et al., (2012)					√		√				√			
Calder et al., (2013)				√				√		√	√	√	√	
Wirtz et al., (2013)		√	√		√					√				
Hollebeek et al., (2014, 2016)		√	√		√									
Jaakkola and Alexander (2014)			√											
Vivek et al., (2014)		√	√		√									
Dessart et al., (2015)		√	√		√		√							
Baldus et al., (2015)														√
Schivinski et al., (2017)			√											
Marzocchi, Morandin & Bergami (2013)								√						
Dwivedi (2015)	√					√							√	
Hsieh et al., (2016)	√					√							√	
Bowden (2009a)					√		√							

The importance of customer engagement has become one of great significance in virtual environments. This is thanks to transformations in the digital world, the evolution of the interactive Internet, and the arrival of new digital interactive technologies and tools that help establish lasting relationships (Sashi, 2012). As a result, in the changed reality of the virtual word, much research has been carried out that focuses on the importance of customer engagement in Web 2.0 applications (i.e., platforms), such as blogs, wikis, and social networks (Hollebeek, 2011b). As the engagement concept is rooted in relationship marketing, researchers have explained its concepts and dimensions from different perspectives. In the early era of customer engagement, Mollen and Wilson (2010, p. 923) defined engagement as “cognitive and affective commitment for an active

participation with the brand through brand websites or computer helped entities especially designed to communicate the brand value.” Their focus was from the online engagement perspective, which is the combination of “the dimensions of dynamic and sustained cognitive processing and the satisfying of instrumental value (i.e., utility and relevance) and experiential value (i.e., emotional congruence with the narrative schema encountered in computer mediated entities)”. As the engagement concept started to be increasingly discussed in academic publications, new strategies emerged in the marketing mix for companies to understand consumers’ behaviour more closely and satisfy their needs and wants (Sashi, 2012). This has given rise to an increasing focus on customer experiences with the brand and on enhancing brand value through better customer experience (Gummerus et al., 2012). In addition, along with the cognitive aspects, customer engagement behaviours were represented in the form of recommendations and the engagement concept was soon applied to communities as well. In this context, Wirtz et al., (2013) define engagement as “an identification with the online brand communities that results in interactive participation”. Their discussion of engagement in online brand communities is related to consumers’ interest in helping each other and participating in community activities to create value for other members and the community. However, Algesheimer et al., (2005) have conceptualized the affective aspect of engagement as comprising “the consumer’s intrinsic motivation to interact and cooperate with community members.”

Brodie et al., (2013) analyse four main qualities to define engagement in relation to brand communities and state that these comprise of “specific interactive experiences between consumers and the brand, and/or other members of the community, a context-dependent psychological state. Therefore, its intensity will vary according to how dynamic and interactive the process is a multidimensional concept that encompasses cognitive, emotional, and behavioural dimensions and finally a central position in the process of exchange-based relationships and since it is related to other community-engagement concepts, which can be antecedents or consequences.”

Consumer engagement, as defined by Brodie et al., (2013), is a specific interactive experience that takes place between consumers and the brand or other members of the community, which is context dependent on users’ psychological state and incorporates cognitive, emotional, and behavioural dimensions in the process of exchange-based relationships. This multidimensional definition provides three main aspects of engagement in a service relationship and interprets consumer

behaviour as comprising affective engagement, behavioural engagement, and cognitive engagement, which provides the working definition of engagement used in this study.

2.3.1 Affective engagement

The affective dimension of engagement represents the addictive and lasting level of emotions a consumer experiences about focal engagement objects (Calder et al., 2013, 2016), where mental and physical strength is manifested in different forms, such as feeling and passion (Vivek et al., 2014). Such feeling for the engagement object can be reflected through two sub aspects of affective engagement, which are vigour (e.g., enthusiasm and excitement, etc.) and strong positive emotion (e.g., joy, passion, interest, etc.) with the focal object in a virtual environment.

Vigour

Vigour is a physical or mental energy and enthusiasm related to the intrinsic level of excitement and enthusiasm felt for the engagement partner (Patterson et al., 2006). This definition is supported by other authors, such as Hollebeek (2011a, 2011b), Mollen & Wilson (2010), and Hsieh et al., (2016). Such mental and physical energy is translated into enthusiasm on social media platforms via comments and feedback (Vivek et al., 2012; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004), which is one of the aspects of the affective dimension of customer engagement.

In addition, in the online brand community context, continuous and intense interaction and information-sharing translates into members' future commitment to the brand they follow through brand communities (Lockie et al., 2016; Wirtz et al., 2013; Kumar et al., 2016), which could finally result in brand commitment and loyalty. Brand commitment can be termed as “an enduring desire to maintain a valued relationship” (Moorman, Zaltman, & Deshpande, 1992, p. 316) or as “a tendency to resist change” (Pritchard, Havitz, & Howard, 1999). This journey of engagement, which starts with vigour, and develops into intrinsic excitement, can later become brand commitment. This could take the form of real behaviour, such as helping others to solve their problems and engaging in brand community activities through an online brand community. This an important part of creating loyalty (Brodie et al., 2013) and generating positive word-of-mouth. Hence, vigour acts as one of the important dimensions of consumer engagement, and it has the potential to lead to loyalty (Dessart et al., 2015) through online brand community engagement.

Strong positive emotion

Strong positive emotion refers to a strong feeling that is generated from a certain circumstance or from a relationship with others. Consumers' affective engagement can be manifested in positive emotions felt for a brand (Kumar et al., 2010) during or after the relationship. Similarly, Patterson et al., (2006) discuss affective engagement as being the emotional presence of a consumer in the form of dedication, whereas Vivek et al., (2012) define it as comprising emotional activities involving intensity, such as passion. Bowden (2009a), on the other hand, describes the emotional connection with, and attachment of consumer to, brands and explains how strong positive emotions can become a basis for loyalty.

Moreover, emotional activities, such as joy, care, interest, passion etc., undertaken in brand communities have increased significantly over the years because of user generated content and online brand communities. As a result, engaged consumers in online brand communities can express their feelings (e.g., love, care, passion) for brands in different ways such as by interacting, and becoming involved with, brand community members (Hollebeek et al., 2011; Brodie et al., 2013; Dessart et al., 2015). Therefore, the expression of strong positive emotions functions as one of the important aspects of affective engagement.

2.3.2 Cognitive engagement

Cognition refers to a set of enduring and active mental states that an individual experience with respect to the focal object of his/her engagement (Hollebeek, 2013; Mollen & Wilson, 2010). Csikszentmihalyi (2004) argues that individuals will engage in an activity when the activity is sufficiently challenging and performable. If the activity is too challenging in comparison with an individual's skill, the individual tends to feel anxious and sometimes gives up trying to perform the activity. On the other hand, if the activity is too easy, the individual may feel bored and may not want to perform the activity. Cognitive engagement within online brand community activities is like the stage of flow. When an individual is said to be experiencing flow, he or she engages in an activity, applies his/her full concentration to the activity, becomes unaware of the passage of time, does not feel self-conscious, and appears to forget their surrounding environment (Perttula, Kiili, Lindstedt, & Tuomi, 2017).

Absorption

Absorption refers to cognitive availability and the amount of time spent actively thinking about, and being attentive to, the focus of engagement. It is the cognitive availability voluntarily dedicated to interacting with the online brand community (Patterson et al., 2006; Vivek et al., 2014; Dessart et al., 2015). An engaged state can make customers forget about time and consume their time on brand-related activities. As is the case with online brand communities on social media, members are attached in such a way that it might cause them to lose track of their time when engaged in the community's activities, which is indirectly related to brand activities. In this sense, absorption fulfils the cognitive aspect of engagement as it comes from the mind.

Attention

Attention is the level of consumers' concentration and immersion with a focal engagement object. It goes a step further than absorption: attention is indicative of the inability to detach oneself once interacting with the online brand community (Dessart et al., 2015; Vivek et al., 2014). Engaged customers can become absorbed in any product or community-related events, activities, or information, and will pay attention to brand community activities.

2.3.3 Behavioural engagement

Previous studies on engagement from behavioural perspectives mainly includes those carried out by Gummerus et al., (2012), Sawhney et al., (2005), Van Doorn et al., (2010), and Verhoef et al., (2010). The academic definitions of engagement are significant in the sense that they define how academics and marketers conceptualize the idea from a theoretical and practical viewpoint. In this sense, the behavioural dimension of engagement in academic research can be traced from the market definition of engagement as “consumers' behavioural manifestation toward a brand or firm, beyond purchase, which results from motivational drivers [. . .]” (MSI, 2010, p. 4). The behavioural dimension of engagement hints at the strong characteristics of engagement, along with cognitive and affective dimensions. In the context of online brand communities, such behavioural characteristics are expressed in the form of sharing content, advocating, and learning from, or about (Brodie et al., 2013), the brand through brand community members.

Sharing

Customer knowledge (e.g., feedback), information-sharing, and resource integration are antecedents of customer engagement (Hollebeek et al., 2016; Kumar & Pansari, 2016). In line with

(Brodie et al., 2011b)'s findings, sharing is present on social media and it is a way for online brand community members to exchange experience, ideas, or just interesting content. Brodie et al., (2013) define sharing as the “sharing of personal relevant information, knowledge and experiences through the process of active contributions to the co-creation of knowledge within the online community”. In virtual environments, it takes no time for content, ideas, or even personal details or attitudes to spread among large numbers of people. In accordance with seminal research on co-creation (Vargo and Lusch, 2004), online brand community engagement relies heavily on the exchange of experiences (Vivek et al., 2012), content, and information. Baldus et al., (2015) explain sharing in the form of helping being “the degree to which a community member wants to help fellow community members by sharing knowledge, experience, or time.”

Learning

The search for resources represents the other side of the coin, whereby consumers seek help, ideas, resources, and information either from the company or other consumers (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Hollebeek et al., 2016; Kumar & Pansari, 2016). In the context of online brand communities where members feel trust and are involved in community activities, learning can become critical. For example, most brands have online communities where members can ask questions, provide solutions regarding the use of branded products, and offer suggestions for further improvement. This can result in new product development and an increase in value for both the brand and its consumers. The best example of such interactions and information-sharing is Lego's idea (Lego, 2017) for developing completely new ideas among the members of the brand through online community activities. Learning is an important facet of consumer engagement (Brodie et al., 2011b). Learning and improving skills is a key aspect of online community participation (Dholakia et al., 2004) and social media is particularly well-suited to this goal, as it allows users to post their questions freely and to receive feedback from other knowledgeable members, or even the brand itself (Zaglia, 2013).

Advocating

Hollebeek (2016) and Kumar and Pansari (2016) explain that customer referrals and customer influence (e.g., word-of-mouth) are related to the activities of engagement that can lead to loyalty. Advocating is the act of members supporting a brand through their recommendations to other users; this is essential for customer engagement with the virtual brand community (Brodie et al., 2013).

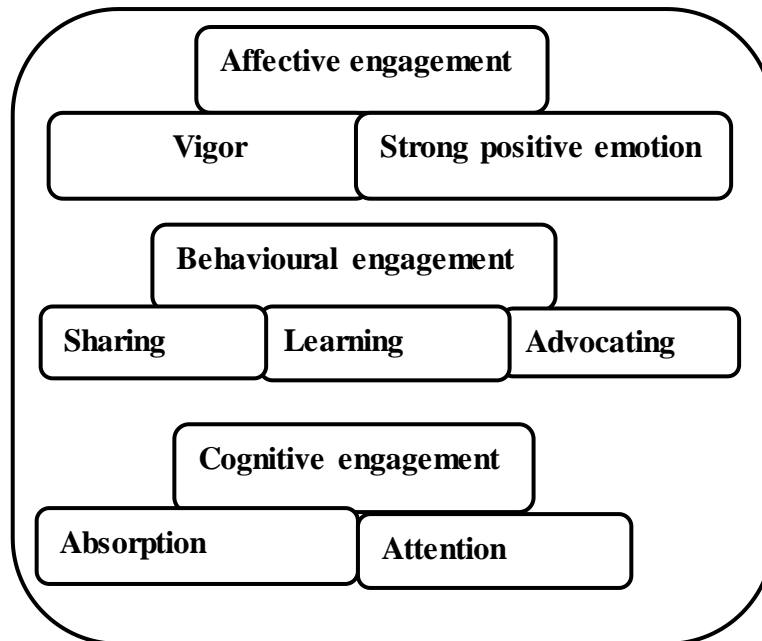
In the brand community context, information-sharing, learning from the content posted by other users, co-creation, the co-development of ideas, sharing recommendations and endorsements, and the socializing effects of being in the community are crucial aspects of consumer engagement behaviour. Realizing the integral nature of these aspects of engagement in the online brand community context, Brodie et al., (2013) discuss sharing, learning, co-developing, advocating, and socializing as being sub categories of consumer engagement. Consumers share day-to-day experiences, knowledge and information regarding the brand and its services, etc., in the brand community. This can encourage brands to take up new ideas, as brands closely observe how the brand community is functioning and take the consumers' knowledge and feedback regarding new product development into consideration. Examples of this include Lego Ideas and Starbucks Coffee, etc. Similarly, consumers' participation with the community provides many brand-related answers, which develops consumers' cognitive faculties regarding the brand and causes consumers to become involved in co-developing new products and ideas. Consumers in brand communities make endorsements and recommendations through their participation in the brand communities, and their engagement and socializing with other brand community members leads to consumer behaviours in terms of their attitude, language, and thinking about the brand communities.

2.4.1 Summary of the choice of engagement dimensions in this study

The review of extant consumer engagement literature suggests that there is no uniformity on engagement dimensions. Some authors have explained the one-dimensional to multi-dimensional characteristics of engagement, while authors such as Sprott et al., (2009), Van Doorn et al., (2010) and Verhoef et al., (2010) have focused on behavioural dimensions. On the other hand, authors such as Brodie et al., (2011a) and Helbeck et al., (2011) explained the cognitive and affective dimensions of engagement (Brodie et al., 2011a). Recently, authors such as Brodie et al., (2013), Hollebeek et al., (2016), Vivek et al., (2012), Gummerus et al., (2012), Calder et al., (2016) and Jaakkola and Alexander (2014) have emphasized the multi-dimensional characteristics of engagement as being cognitive, affective, and behavioural. However, previous research does not provide a consistent explanation of the categories of engagement in the user generated online brand community environment (Brodie et al., 2013; Vivek et al., 2014; Dessart et al., 2015; Calder et al., 2016; Baldus, 2015). Therefore, there are several questions to be answered regarding what the

characteristics of engagement are in user generated online brand communities and how such characteristics influence consumer relationship behaviour in user generated online brand communities embedded in social networks (e.g., Facebook). In addition, in the online environment, consumers' behaviours, thinking patterns, and emotions change very quickly. What the patterns are in consumer to consumer interactions in user generated online brand community platforms is what marketers and academics want to know more about. The choice of engagement components used in this study are based on the most frequently used dimensions from the extant literature, as shown in the figure below.

Figure 2: Summary of the consumer engagement dimensions used in this study



Source: Author's representation from Brodie et al., (2013), Dessart et al., (2013), Vivek et al., (2012) and Patterson (2009)

2.5.1 Consumer behaviour study

Most researchers agree with the definition of consumer behaviour proposed by Hoyer & MacInnis (2007), which states that consumer behaviour is “the behaviour that customer displays in searching for, purchasing, using, evaluating, and disposing of products, services, and ideas” (Hoyer & MacInnis, 2007).

Hoyer and MacInnis define broader categories of customer behaviour in their definition, which suits various consumer behaviour-related research studies ranging from manufacturing to services industries. In this study, consumer engagement behaviour is related to the relationship between consumers and online brand communities, and their influence on brand-related activities and outcomes. Hence, understanding consumer behaviour literature is important in this study because this research explores the consumer engagement dimensions and their consequences in user generated online brand communities.

The concept of customer behaviour emerged as a marketing strategy in the middle of the 20th century. The concept of customer behaviour in marketing developed rapidly as soon as marketers identified the fact that knowing customers’ preferences and needs could enable them to sell increasing numbers of their goods, and that they could gain certain advantages by doing so (Engel et al., 2005). Gradually, marketers started to produce brands and products that customers bought and were willing to buy. Although customer behaviour in this study is examined from the marketing perspective, it has been developed from disciplines such as marketing, economics, and other behavioural sciences. Moreover, the concepts and foundations of customer behaviour have a strong basis in many scientific disciplines, such as the social sciences (e.g., psychology, sociology, and economics) and recently, in information systems, following the arrival and development of the digital Internet, especially in terms of the user generated content (i.e., Web 2.0) features of the Internet (Karimi, 2013).

2.5.2 Online consumer behaviour

Customer behaviour studies in recent years have gone through a transformation because of the advancement of the Internet, which has allowed customers to interact and share information with

each other through different Internet-mediated channels (Forrester, 2016; Ray et al., 2014). This development and advancement of digital technology has provided new communication channels for customers. On the other hand, marketers face the huge challenge of interacting with their customers in a multichannel scenario, and their growth and progress relies on how familiar they are with customer behaviour in such online channels and platforms. More importantly, the interactive features of the internet allowed customers and likeminded individuals to come together to communicate each other in the virtual environment, which eventually encouraged them to form online communities (Ray et al., 2014). Many previous studies (e.g., Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001; De Valck et al., 2009; Wirtz et al., 2013; Zagilia, 2013; Gummerus et al., 2012) have discussed customer behaviour in online communities. However, this field is still under-researched because of recent advancements and technological developments (Baldus et al., 2015; Kumar et al., 2016). Research is now needed that investigates how these developments affect customer engagement behaviour in user generated online brand communities.

2.6.1 Social influence theory in online brand community behaviour

Kelman (1974) shows how individual attitudes are constructed in a group and he was the first to introduce social influence theory. Later, his concept was used in information systems after the internet became the main source of communication by which to analyse users’ attitudes or behaviours in the online environment. However, previous research has used different theories to discuss the social influence on consumer behaviour in online communities. Theories such as Tajfel & Turner (1979)’s identification theory, Bagozzi & Dholakia (2002)’s motivational theories, and Wellman & Gulia (1999)’s social network analysis have been adopted to explore the components that influence online brand community users’ behaviour. Moreover, Dholakia et al., (2014) discuss the use of these theories and reflect on their importance, stating that “a common theme underlying many of these studies is to better understand the nature and role of social influence exerted by the community on its members.”

The social influence on consumer engagement behaviour has become one of the significant aspects in online brand communities. Previous research (e.g., Dholakia et al., 2004; Castle et al., 2014; Zou, 2012) suggests that there are three components (e.g., identification, internalization, and compliance) of social influence on consumer behaviour in online brand communities.

Firstly, identification takes place in a situation where an individual wants to maintain a good relationship with an individual or a group. Identification has two categories, which are known as brand identification and community identification. Carlson et al., (2008) define these as “the degree of overlap between individuals’ self-schema and the schema they hold for another target object, which can be brand or community.”

Secondly, internalization is related to the individual’s changes in attitude that result from being part of a community where individuals consider their goals and values alongside the goals and values of the other members of the community (Martin-Lopez et al., 2017). In the case of online brand communities, members of the community feel engaged because they are part of a group that is made up of engaged members. Online brand communities are a place where users are free to join and leave the community. Participation is also a voluntary activity; therefore, the component of “compliance” is considered insignificant and hence it is not given priority as a component of social customer engagement.

Members of communities, such as online brand communities, come together as their thinking about a brand is the same. They are a collection of likeminded people who identify themselves with the group’s activities as much as their own because of the responsibility, history, and passion that they share with others. Hence, in such an environment, members’ engagement with the community is such that members engage with their peers irrespective of time, place, and situation. In such communities, they exhibit positive human feelings, emotions, thoughts, and behaviours in the form of interaction, involvement, and sharing their experiences of the brand. They also share information, such as by providing positive feedback, advocating, endorsing the brand, and sharing their knowledge about the brand in the form of word-of-mouth among members both online and offline.

2.7.1 Community and its background

Community is a group of individuals who share a similar interest (Martinez-Lopez et al., 2017). They may vary in numbers: a community can be made up of between two and many thousands of individuals (Carter, 2008). Such individuals connect willingly with each other in a group and have a common goal (Gallego, 2012). In this sense, community can be explained as being an association

of individuals or small groups who are excited to talk each other and who have a feeling of reciprocal obligation (Koh & Kim, 2008). There are certain things to consider as to why individuals associate themselves with communities and feel themselves to be important members of them. Sarason (1974, p. 157) explains the impression of community as being a “perception of similarity to others, an acknowledged interdependence with others, a willingness to maintain this interdependence by giving to or doing for others what one expects from them, and the feeling that one is part of a larger dependable and stable structure.” This definition clearly suggests that individuals in a community are interconnected with each other and share the feeling of being part of a large and trustworthy organization. Similarly, McMillan and Chavis (1986) emphasize that these individuals are committed to each other and define community as “a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members’ needs will be met through their commitment to be together.”

The history of community goes back to primitive times: the concept was there among animal species, such as hominids and others, who lived in communities and, later, among Homo Sapiens. Many species demonstrate community traits either willingly or because of some rules have been imposed among them: the community affects their lives and behaviour (Gallego, 2012).

There is no uniformity among researches regarding the definition, and primary characteristics, of a community (Ewing, Wagstaff, & Powell, 2013). Researchers in different disciplines have researched communities and their characteristics among their members (e.g., Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006a; Koh & Kim, 2003, 2004; Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001). Researchers have considered different theories to identify how community members connect each other or what motivates them to do so. Ewing et al., (2013) took help from social identification theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and explained how members identify themselves in a group and develop group loyalty while, at the same time, they differentiate themselves from other groups. Haslam et al., (2006) used the same theory to describe members’ feelings as “We”, which is above “I”, and against “They”.

Another theory is self-categorization theory (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherill, 1987), which explains that community members who are part of a community change their opinion because they find themselves in a social context. Similarly, social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954) describes the situation where members compare themselves to others and become connected to the community (i.e., how those that are different from other individuals form other groups).

In the past, communities were limited to a small number of homogeneous individuals who formed a group because they shared emotional connections with each other. However, community traits over the years have changed significantly and, today, communities have become groups of heterogeneous individuals who share similar characteristics (Thomas, Price, & Schau, 2013). Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) summarize community characteristics and their definition has been commonly used to explain community characteristics as consciousness of a kind, which is a feeling of interconnectedness among members that differentiates members from those who are not part of the community. Bagozzi & Dholakia (2006a) state that it is through shared rituals, tradition as a process, rules, and actions that members guided by community principles develop their community identity, and that their sense of moral duty refers to internal coherence with the same moral values that are shared among the members.

Hence, groups of individuals form communities and they have distinct objectives, intentions, and goals that they share, or have the intention to share, among the individuals in the community. To accomplish such goals, as mentioned before, they perform and interact psychologically and behaviourally to communicate what they want to share among the community. This is what makes them different from other communities.

2.7.2 Traditional brand communities and online brand communities

De Valck et al., (2009) describe online brand communities (OBC) as being “a specialized, non-geographically bound, online community, based on social communications and relationships among a brand's customers.” Traditional communities, before the arrival of online communities, had three main characteristics: the communities were locally based, members were involved with each other through social interaction, and they shared a bond among members (Hillery, 1955). The physical and local characteristics of community members made them different in different regions although, after the arrival of the internet, this boundary was dismantled, and different groups could collaborate with each other through digital platforms. Social interactions among groups is another key factor for developing relationships and emotional bonds and providing feelings of comfort and affiliation (Koh & Kim, 2003, 2004). The members come from different regions and backgrounds, which could create problems among the communities; however, since these members are socially

and economically interdependent, this becomes the reason that unity is created between the members (Thomas et al., 2013).

Brand communities are the product of traditional communities and many researchers argue that they are genuine communities, which are structured around a brand. Community members of such communities engage in common activity on behalf of a certain brand among the other brand members around the world (Cova & Pace, 2006), and such brand communities exhibit relationships between the brand and the community members (i.e., consumers) and between community members (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). In addition, brand communities consist of heterogeneous groups who have an interest in the brand: these can be consumers, producers, and other social and economic partners, characters, etc., (Thomas et al., 2013). They also have clash and competition, as these are the traits of being human, which shape the behaviour of the brand communities and make one community different from other brand communities (Ewing et al., 2013). Most of the extant brand community literature refers to Muniz & O'Guinn (2001) to explain the three main characteristics of a brand community: shared consciousness, rituals, traditions, and moral responsibility to the society are considered a traditional definition of brand communities. As a traditional definition of brand communities, it emphasizes the fact that community members share a sense of connectedness and belonging and are part of the same collective group. Their group connection and activities transform members' selves into a similar group self, as members of the group share the same culture, rituals, and other celebrations, and as they establish their own roles, objectives, and limitations. In addition, members feel responsibility towards their community and feel that they should help each other and act according to what is right for the community.

However, virtual communities, in comparison with traditional communities, demand a broader explanation of their characteristics, given the new circumstances in which they are formed. The characteristics of online communities of consumption, such as reaching out to wider groups, focussing on interactions, appeals regarding group identity and the brand, time spent among peers, and peers' feelings, thinking, and beliefs (Habibi et al., 2014; Martinez-Lopez et al., 2017) are important components that influence engagement and the business outcome result for the brand concerned.

Online brand communities have become a platform for consumers in value creation (Schau et al., 2009). Consumers can co-create in such online platforms and provide brands with creative

suggestions through their observations that brands can use for new product development, as in the case of Lego. Therefore, co-creation has a very important role to play in value creation (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Creative interactions among consumers enhances consumers' attention and their intention to identify with the brand, so that they gain a positive motivation to make future purchases (Von Hippel, 1986). Consumers/peers can provide information, and offer help and suggestions, which can be useful for making brand-related decisions. Such information is a useful tool by which to gain value for both customers as well as brands.

In the complex and ever-changing online brand community environment, consumers' behaviours are difficult to predict, and the characteristics of online communities can remain highly unpredictable in the community setting. However, members' positive and continuous group interactions, and members' commitment towards the community, can justify the community rather better than recourse to a theory (Anderson, 2005; Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001).

Unlike traditional brand communities, online brand communities exhibit commercial characteristics in the sense that consumers in such communities interact, and share experiences and information about the brand, which ultimately helps to influence other consumers and members of the community (Brogi, 2014).

Research related to OBC carried out in the marketing, business, and information systems disciplines explains the differences between online brand communities and traditional brand communities by focusing on how group behaviour, knowledge, and information-sharing function in communities embedded in social media. In this regard, one of the most used definitions of brand communities is one that describes them as being a "specialized non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relations among admirers of a brand" (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001, p. 412). Online brand communities also have their foundations in brand communities, but they are different in terms of their wider reach and effects. Such communities are founded on computer-based interaction, because consumers' activities among members of the community, such as sharing similar interests, excitement, and willingness to participate, take place mostly on social networking platforms and these interactions can be initiated by consumers or brands depending on the engagement focus (Dessart et al., 2015; Laroche et al., 2013).

Traditional communities consist of families, friends, schoolmates, neighbours, work colleagues, and members of hobby groups. On the other hand, online communities do not have a characteristic as to who their members are, although such communities are mostly made up of internet users

around the world, of which there are nearly 3.8 billion (Statista, 2017). These users share information and interact with each other in relation to their topic of interest through the internet and social networking platforms (Nasi, Rasanen, & Lehdonvirta, 2011).

In this regard, online community members have the option to choose their community group, membership, involvement, communication, and interaction according to their need and motivations, whereas, in traditional communities, such activities are involuntary or obligatory as members are connected through a small and emotional group of friends and family (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002). Hence, it is important to know the differences between these two communities: one involves voluntary activities and involvement, whereas other the involves obligatory participation.

Online communities, as mentioned, are founded on computer-mediated interaction and therefore they are different from traditional communities involving personal and face-to-face interaction. Online community members are connected, first, through the internet and, later, may develop physical contact depending on their level of connection and interactions (Wirtz et al., 2013). On the other hand, traditional community relationships develop offline and their connection and bonds may be further strengthened through online communities and their interactions (Koh & Kim, 2003, 2004). In this sense, although they follow a different connection process, both types still share some similarities.

In the case of both online brand communities and traditional brand communities, both share basic principals in terms of community characteristics, whereby individuals identify themselves with the social or community self, take on the community's social norms and values as their own, and develop feelings of emotional attachment towards the community. These two communities, although they share these common dimensions of a community, do not overlap with each other. Online brand communities are structured around the interactive features of internet-based technologies in an electronic setting, which allows members access to the worldwide population through which they can develop relationships among users with similar interests in a brand (Ouwersloot & Odekerken-Schreoder, 2008), whereas traditional brand communities are related to the offline environment, where there is limited access and reach among members.

To sum up, online brand communities are the developed form of traditional brand communities, and they retain the basic characteristics of group identity, group norms and values, and sense of belonging to the community. The arrival of social networking platforms and the interactive

features of the internet has made community formation more pervasive and added a broader commercial orientation. The change from offline to online communities has erased geographical boundaries, added dynamism to the relationship, and reduced the importance of physical contact between members (Sicilia & Palazon, 2008). The relationships between members in traditional brand communities was limited because of physical boundaries, whereas online brand communities enjoy freedom from physical boundaries as the communications among members with similar interests in a brand can be shared electronically, in a real time, and among wider numbers of people around the world.

The notable difference between offline and online brand communities is that online brand communities have a global reach at a low cost (Wirtz et al., 2013). However, it should be noted that that users of online brand communities can easily hide their identities and that they may not be committed to the community's rituals and traditions if they are not engaged with the brand community, which can result in poor relationships between members. This can happen because, unlike in traditional brand communities, online brand community members first become members of the group through the internet, develop their relationships online, and meet physically only at a later stage. However, online brand communities allow members to become involved with each other online, which can have a greater impact on offline participation and involvement as well.

Let us look at the example of Harley-Davidson and Lego. In the beginning, both brands had a strong offline brand community that later flourished in the form of an online brand community. This enhanced value for both the consumers and the brand itself, as members were involved in co-creation and new product development.

Table 5: Comparison of online and offline brand communities

<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Traditional brand community</i>	<i>Online brand community</i>
Medium of interaction	Face to face (formal: individuals, groups)	Virtual (informal: individuals, many sub groups)
Geographical characteristics	Limited: members must meet physically at a specific time and place	Asynchronous and without geographical limitations
Costs of the relationship	High (monetary costs of travel, plus costs of time and effort)	Low (online video and audio chat through social networks, etc.,)
Participation and engagement with the brand/brand community	Effective participation and engagement but with limited members	Effectiveness depends on the level of participation and engagement with heterogenous members

Reason for participation and engagement	Seeking the intrinsic benefits of participating and maintaining relationships (e.g., trust)	Functional benefits (e.g., help, value, co-creation)
Community norms and rituals	Norms, rituals, and identification with the group tend to be more intense and to involve moral responsibility	Dependent on the members' experience and information-sharing
User identity and communication between members	The identities of users are not hidden Communication is deeper but less fluid	Possibility of having a virtual identity different from one's real identity Easier and unlimited communication, but sometimes shallower and less relevant for members

Source: Author's representation from Wirtz et al., (2013, p. 227)

2.7.3 Classification of online communities

Online communities have been significantly transformed with the advancement of the internet, and especially the user generated features of the internet. As a result, online communities of the past, such as news groups, chat rooms, newsletters, and multi-user domains etc., have evolved into online communities on the social networks of today, where members of these communities share strong connections and are involved for commercial purposes. The growth of such online communities allows members to be interconnected with the community and to take part in relationship building and social interaction.

Gusfield classified physical communities into two types: geographic-based communities and human relationship-based communities (Gusfield, 1975). Most of today's online communities have developed from the basic characteristics of Gusfield's second type; namely, human relationship-based communities.

One of the earliest accepted classifications of online communities comes from Hagel & Armstrong (1997), who explain that consumers participate with online communities for social and transactional reasons. They discuss four types of communities that are based on individuals' motivations for participating with the community. These include social motivations, transactional motivations, communities directed towards consumers, and communities directed towards

business communities. Likewise, Stanoevska-Slabeva (2001) and Lechner et al., (2002) classified online communities by using the hypothesis that online communities are a combination of “members and platforms”. The second type is a platform where individuals meet, interact, and initiate communication, whereas communities have four categories based on their members, which include discussion, the completion of specific goals, the virtual environment, and hybrid communities. In discussion communities, members have the goal of discussing things with members and forming personal opinions. Such discussion communities can have their foundations in relationships between individuals of equal status who want to develop social relationships with each other, such as by taking part in discussions with individuals who have similar interests and beliefs (e.g., politics). Communities of practice, where individuals/organizations indirectly discuss how to do things better, are where users converse through comments and ratings (e.g., a movie rated on a rating site). The completion of specific goals, such as when members try to achieve a common goal in a collective manner, can include learning about a product, conducting a transaction, improving a shopping experience, and creating information by which to redesign a product or service, etc. The virtual environment is one in which members look to have new life experience in a social environment, such as by using avatars, using the Second Life platform, or by participating in online games. In addition, there are hybrid communities, which combine all three types discussed here, such as those for BMW motorcycles and Nikon cameras.

Henri and Pudelko (2003) suggest four categories of virtual communities. These are communities of interest, communities of interest in a common goal, communities of learning, and communities of practice. A similar classification is also suggested by Lechner & Hummel (2002) relating to the relationship between users and companies: they suggest commercial orientation (i.e., objective) to company and consumers, such participation between B2B, B2C and C2C, and those without commercial orientation (i.e., objective) (e.g., community involvement).

Further, in order to explain communities with commercial goals, Franz and Wolkingner (2003) suggest the concept of standalone communities. These communities do not participate in the organization’s activities (e.g., communities in advertising, subscriptions, etc.). On the contrary, add-on communities allow consumers to share their opinions and ideas, and to co-create new products (e.g., surveys, market research etc.).

Consumer types and engagement in online brand communities

As discussed in the previous sections, engagement is the combination of affective, behavioural, and cognitive elements with the focal object. The focal object in this study is online brand communities, where the intensity of members' engagement varies accordingly to their interests, needs, and personal motivations (Goulding, Shankar, & Canniford, 2013). Against this backdrop, Sashi (2012) classified four types of customers in terms of their level of engagement and differentiated them accordingly as being transactional customers, delighted customers, loyal customers, and fans.

Transactional customers contact the brand because they simply buy from the brand; hence, their relationship with the brand is exchange-centric, has no mental element, and these customers have no psychological connection with the brand. Such customers are impressed by the offer the brand has presented and they have no individual relationship with the brand. However, such customers could be translated into loyal customers or transformed into fans if they are dealt with efficiently, provided with a satisfactory product experience combined with correct and timely information, and provided with excellent quality in terms of the content and product. Delighted customers, on the other hand, possess a higher emotional connection with the brand than those in an exchange-centric relationship. Such customers may not necessarily interact with the brand frequently, but they hope for, and expect, excellent an experience whenever they interact. Such customers exhibit affective commitment for the brand that can easily be translated into affective engagement and be manifested in recommendations and frequent future purchases. Loyal customers have a high exchange-centric relationship and low emotional bond because of the lack of alternative products, and there are barriers in terms of switching brands as well. This may be because of the commitment, cost, time, place, and choice of the product/brand. Such customers can be changed into fans if they are treated with positive customer strategies. Fans have a very strong exchange-centric relationship and emotional connection with the brand. Such customers demonstrate both affective and calculative commitment: they are both passionate about the brand and protectors of the brand at the same time.

Users' types and engagement in online brand communities

There are several studies regarding the types of users and their level of engagement, especially in social networking and online brand communities. Quinton & Harridge-March (2010) have combined all the other authors' views and explanations, have and classified users' level of engagement as lurkers, newbies or tourists, celebrities, devotees, insiders, and lead members.

Lurkers are the categories of users who only observe the community's characteristics before they become involved with the community, whereas newbies or tourists are the community members who only make comments but are not engaged with the community's activities. On the other hand, celebrities are the members of the community who spend, and contribute, time and effort to the community's activities. Their cognitive aspect of engagement is very active. Minglers are involved in the community's activities and are involved in publishing, but their publishing activities are not regular. Devotees, on the other hand, are the members of the community who are passionate users and who publish regularly on the community platform they are associated with. Insiders demonstrate expertise in the topics of discussion and conservations being undertaken and have strong emotional and social bonds with the community and network. Finally, lead members, or evangelists, demonstrate a high level of commitment to the community and are very important members of the community.

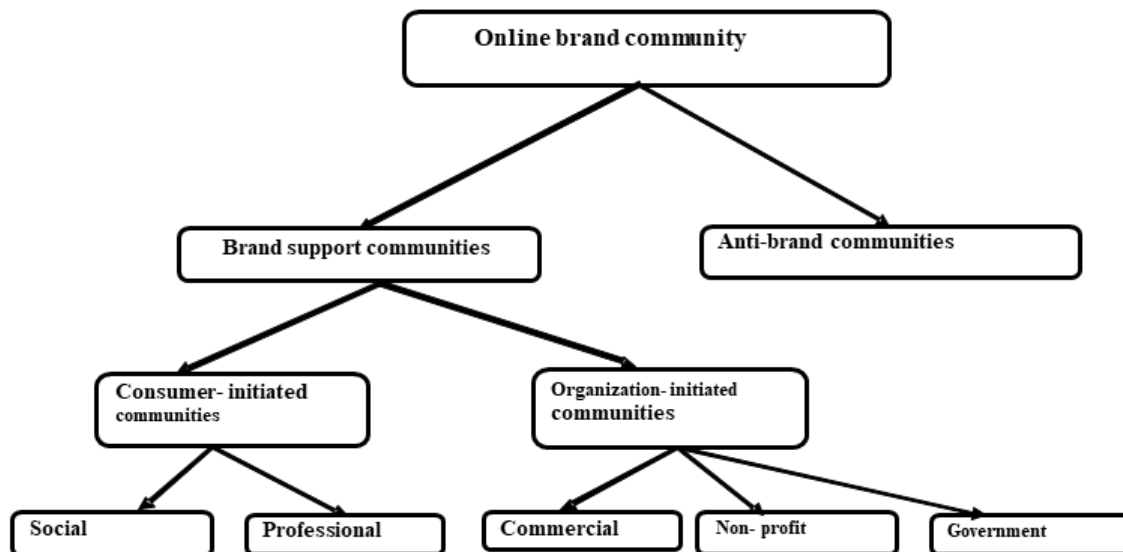
2.7.4 User and company sponsored communities

Technology allows the users of any brand to create a brand community, like most companies do. Like company-initiated brand communities, user generated online brand communities are also created and governed by brand enthusiasts through social networks—also known as embedded online brand communities—such as those on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube (e.g., Fans of Apple) and through web pages (e.g., www.fordforum.com). As Zagila (2013) and Gummerus et al., (2012) suggest, Facebook allows companies and brand enthusiasts to create a brand community for their preferred brand and other individuals can join the brand community by liking and following the communities while, at the same time, sharing information and interacting with other members. However, the aims of company-initiated brand communities and user generated brand communities are different.

Porter (2004) has classified online communities into five categories that combine the previous classification, which is also known as the Five Ps of online communities. His classification is widely accepted and recognized and comprises purpose (e.g., content of the interaction and discussion), place (e.g., online, or partly online), platform (e.g., social network chat, email, or a combination of the two), population (e.g., small groups, social networks, public gatherings, etc.,) and profit (e.g., return from the discussion).

Porter has classified online communities in relation to how they are managed, such as whether they are member-initiated communities or company managed. Member-initiated communities are the result of people's interest in interacting with other people and sharing their opinions, ideas, or interests. Members of such communities administer the group activities, which have a focus on social relationships, interactions, and professional relationships. On the other hand, company-initiated online communities are controlled by the company's administration: they are created for the benefit for the company or brand and have financial aims.

Figure 3: Classifications of online brand communities



Source: Author's representation from Porter (2004) and Holt (2002)

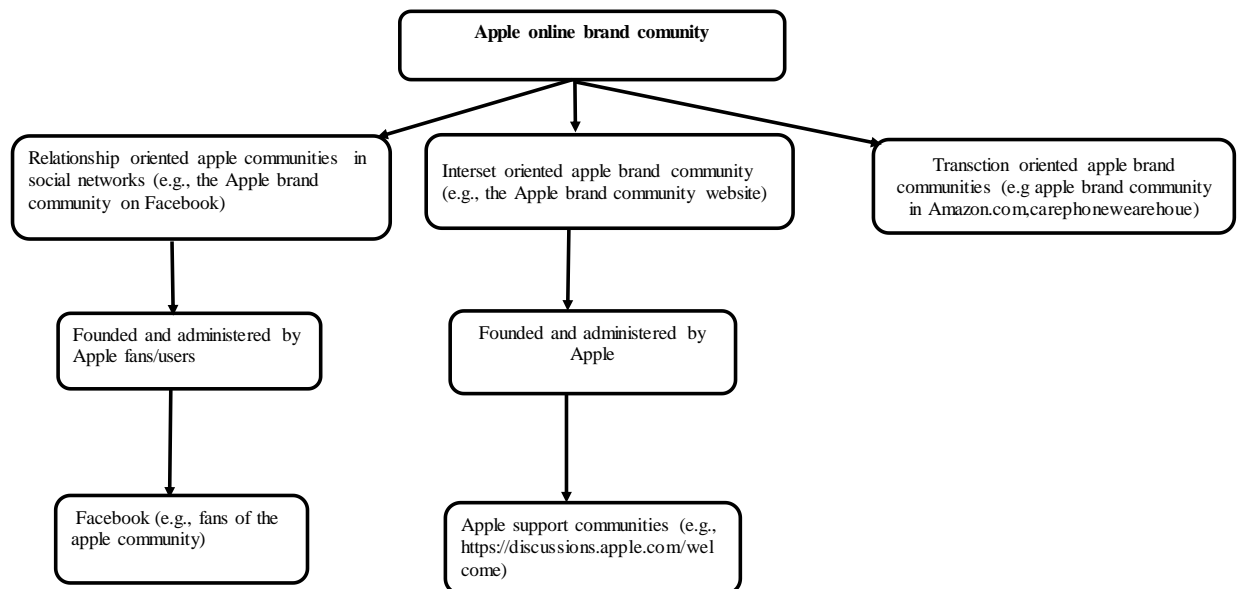
Other authors have supported Porter and have classified online brand communities from different perspectives and with different objectives: one common aspect of their analysis is who initiates the community. There are mainly two types of online brand communities: consumer-initiated online brand communities and company-initiated brand communities (Henri & Pudelko, 2003; Kozinets, 1999; Porter, 2004; Sung, Kim, Kwon, & Moon, 2010).

Consumers initiate online brand communities because of their love and care for the brand, and the brands are invigorated because of their users (Jang et al., 2008). Consumers express their

excitement, passion, care, identity, etc., towards the brand by sharing information regarding the brand they are a fan of and they seek to extend their community to incorporate people who also think the same things about the brand. Some of the existing user generated brand communities include Lego (ideas.lego.com), Ford (www.fordforum.com), Volvo (www.volvoforum.org.uk) and Fans of Apple on Facebook.

These online brand communities offer platforms on which brand users, fans, and enthusiasts, etc., can interact and share experiences with members who have similar feelings and emotions towards the brand, which are expressed on social networking sites (e.g., Facebook).

Figure 4: Apple's online brand community structure



Source: Author's representation from Porter (2004)

Apple has one of the largest communities in the world on its official website (<https://discussions.apple.com/welcome>), which was founded, and is administered, by Apple itself. Apart from its company generated online brand community, Apple has also brand communities created and governed by other third parties (e.g., service companies) such as Carphone Warehouse, Tesco, Amazon, etc., and user generated brand communities, which are embedded in social

networks such as Facebook (www.facebook.com/fansofapple), which were created, and are governed, by fans of Apple. Here, admirers and Apple lovers can join, interact, share their experiences, and help each other in large numbers within the community.

Company generated online brand communities function as a source by which to collect consumer knowledge and they are created to fulfil business goals (e.g., the company's future growth and choice of consumers) by using the information shared by consumers (Jang et al., 2008; Sung et al., 2010; Gruner, Homburg, & Lukas, 2014). Moreover, De Almeida, Mazzon, Dholakia, and Muller (2013) and Oracle (2018) suggest that such communities monitor consumers' interactions and collect and analyse information to strengthen the relationship between consumers and, finally, to increase the number of purchases made and to enhance loyalty for the brand (e.g., www.community.oracle.com/welcome).

User generated online brand communities do not have any business orientation or goals. Such communities are the result of brand love, care, and admiration. Members of these communities look for similar users who share the same feelings, relationship with brand, and emotions. Likewise, users exercise a higher spontaneity of expression, identify with other members more closely, form a closer attachment with the group creator, and have higher levels of involvement and participation within the community. Such activities are very important for marketers to identify the shopping behaviours, attitudes, loyalty, and word-of-mouth activities—both online and offline—of consumers past, present, and future.

The history of brand communities suggests that they were founded, controlled, and maintained by the company of the concerned brand but governed by the users who shared their information and experiences (Wirtz et al., 2013). However, in recent times, communities have emerged that have different characteristics, and consumers' motivations towards these communities—and therefore their brand initiation and governance—vary accordingly. The Apple community was founded, and is governed, by the brand through its official company website, whereas the Apple community was founded, and is governed, by users on social networking sites such as Facebook. There are brand communities that were created by the brand but governed by the community (e.g., King Arthur Flour); communities created by the community but governed by the brand (e.g., Gulpener); and communities created and maintained by the community itself (e.g., Lego) (Wirtz et al., 2013).

To conclude, companies have a commercial objective for creating an official brand community. They want to develop a relationship with consumers to create value for the company as well as for

consumers. However, they do not have control over consumer-initiated brand communities on social media platforms, such the Apple brand community, which are initiated by users who are consumers of a brand. Consumers who are passionate, care about, and are interested in the brand unite to develop a social relationship and, by becoming involved in social relationships with other members, their relationship with the brand is intensified. This may result in increased engagement, participation, loyalty, and word-of-mouth. However, previous researchers and marketers have paid more attention to company generated online brand communities (Gruner, Homburg, & Lukas, 2014; Wirtz et al., 2013), whereas consumer generated brand communities are still under-explored (Jang et al., 2008; Shang et al., 2006; Martinez-Lopez et al., 2017). This study explores how consumers participate and engage in user generated online brand communities.

2.8.1 The relationship between participation, engagement, loyalty, and word-of-mouth and its consequences

2.8.2 Participation

Participation as described by Shao (2009) and Muntinga et al., (2011) is terms of contributing. At this level, consumers respond to their focal object, for example, by commenting on a picture posted by a brand or another consumer on Facebook (Maslowska et al., 2016). It is like the “lower engagement” discussed by Malthouse, Haenlein, et al., (2013) wherein consumers exhibit behavioural activities, which are one of the characteristics of engagement. In the traditional relationship marketing context, brand and customer participation provided goods and transaction-oriented logic, where business outcomes, such as future purchase intentions and customer retention, were the fundamentals behind the customer-brand relationship. However, service dominant logic (SDL), as proposed by (Vargo & Lusch (2004, 2016), surfaced in the marketing environment after Web 2.0 (i.e., interactive) features of the internet were introduced. The market experienced the entry of new players into the market and the relationship went beyond the customer to the brand relationship. The contemporary shift from a goods-centred logic to a S-D logic (Chan, Yim, & Lam, 2010; Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2016) led to the concept of participation being regarded as an integral means by which customer engagement is achieved. The new parties, such as other customers, brand community members, and other stakeholders, appeared via new

platforms in the digital or virtual world. A new concept by which to define customer and brand activities was required in the market because the concept of participation failed to incorporate customers' interactions with their focal objects. Hence, the new term "engagement" emerged in this new and changed scenario. However, participation is not completely different from engagement. In the changed and complex marketing relationship scenario, participation still has some behavioural aspects of engagement, such as interaction, information-sharing and feedback, recommendations, etc., and it acts as an engagement trigger in the virtual context of relationship marketing (Keller, 2013).

Previous studies on customer participation in relationship marketing defined the degree to which a customer is involved in producing or delivering the service (Dabholkar, 1990). Not all customers have the same level of participation activities, which are dependent on their level of interest in gaining and sharing information with the object of participation. Participation also means "taking part in" or "contributing to" some specific activity or event (Casalo et al., 2010; Barki & Hartwick, 1989, 1994; Vroom & Jago, 1988). In addition, participation depends on the interaction between the focal subject and object, and whether the intention and interaction between the subject and object match and develop into the higher level of participation, which will ultimately lead to engagement in virtual environments. In this sense, participation is the degree to which customers produce and deliver services ranging from active to passive participation, and it is one of the requirements for the expression of engagement (Bolton and Saxena-Iyer, 2009; Vivek et al., 2014).

Another aspect of customer participation can be manifested in the form of customers' voluntary activities that result from their affinity, and affection, for their choice of brands or brand communities. From this point of view, consumer participation is described from different perspectives as being one of the forms of customers' voluntary performance, as is exhibited in customer-to-firm behaviour (Leckie et al., 2016) through either customer-to-firm or customer-to-customer interactions in the social media context. Participation refers to the extent to which consumers provide constructive feedback and helpful suggestions about the service offering and delivery to service organisations, and whether such suggestions and involvement can be manifested through different mediums and forms (Eisingerich et al., 2014).

Previous research on participation and engagement suggests that participation represents behavioural components in relationships where engagement is the combination of psychological,

emotional, and behavioural components (Casalo et al., 2010; Koh & Kim, 2004; Cheung et al., 2011; Brodie et al., 2011b; Vivek et al., 2014). Moreover, participation is related to consumers' connection with the brand at the time of purchase and is exchange-centric, whereas engagement lasts even after the transactional relationship has ended (Vivek, 2009). Participation can be an interactive situation that is of common interest to the firm, as well as to the customer or between customers and other customers. This interaction can produce higher levels of enthusiasm and, subsequently, a greater engagement with the entity (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006). Potential or current customers build experience-based relationships through intense participation with the brand by way of the unique experiences they have with the offerings and activities of the organization (Vivek et al., 2012).

In a broader nomological network of service relationships, engagement functions—regarding other relationship concepts, such as participation—represent one of the specific consumer engagement antecedents (Brodie et al., 2011). The difference between engagement and participation lies in the fact that consumer engagement in the service relationship includes interactive, experiential, and co-creative properties in a broader nomological service relationship. In such a network of services, one of the required CE antecedents is participation, which initiates the process that may lead to other relational consequences, including loyalty and word-of-mouth (Brodie et al., 2011). Engagement can be manifested cognitively, affectively, behaviourally, or even socially. The cognitive and affective elements of customer engagement incorporate the experience and feelings of the customer, while the behavioural element represents the participation of current and potential customers (Vivek et al., 2012).

Consumers' participation might represent a lower level of consumer engagement when consumers simply consume the information provided by brands through different channels, or when they interact with it by liking or sharing it on social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, YouTube, or Twitter). These activities initiate the engagement process but might not have all the interactive experiences of engagement (Malthouse et al., 2013).

Literature from different disciplines also suggests the fact that participation is one of the components of engagement. Participation incorporates some aspects of engagement (Atherley, 2011). Customers share information and provide suggestions, as Chan et al., (2010) state that customers participate in downloading, reading, giving feedback, and giving opinions and feedback to the company. Williams (2008) focuses on the behavioural and active participatory aspect of

engagement in sociology, whereas Wagner & Majchrzak (2007) focus on participation in information systems and the role of sharing information in co-creating the process of exchanging knowledge. On the other hand, engagement—according to its broader definition—is cognitive, emotional, and behavioural in nature (Brodie et al., 2011; Hollebeek et al., 2011a, 2011b; Vivek et al., 2014) and is not limited to the behavioural manifestation of participation.

One of the important components of customer participation is interaction. The more people participate and communicate/interact with an organization or communities of consumers, the more likely it is that they will develop social bonds and a connection with it/them (Bendapudi & Leone, 2003; Wheelock et al., 2012; Leckie, C., Nyadzayo, M. W., & Johnson, L. W., 2016). This will make the relationship more resistant to failure. Thus, customer participation can be an important determinant of purchase behaviour. Customer participation via social networks was brought about by the shift from a goods-centred logic to a service-centred logic in the field of marketing (Chan, Yim, & Lam, 2010; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). This positively influences a customer's interaction and subsequent engagement with the resulting product, as well as with the company, and it may initiate the expansion of current service offerings or the development of entirely new services (Von Hippel, 2005). Consumer participation provides many benefits, such as access to timely information (Fang, 2008), active interaction between focal consumers and the focal object (Brodie et al., 2011), and better involvement (Vivek, 2017). Research shows that consumer participation in interactions focussed on an interest common to both the organisation and consumer result in higher levels of enthusiasm, thereby leading to engagement with the organisation/ brand (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006; Vivek et al., 2012). Previous research suggests that participation is an antecedent of engagement (Vivek et al., 2014, 2017; Hollebeek et al., 2011; Brodie et al., 2011), but empirical investigation of this relationship is lacking.

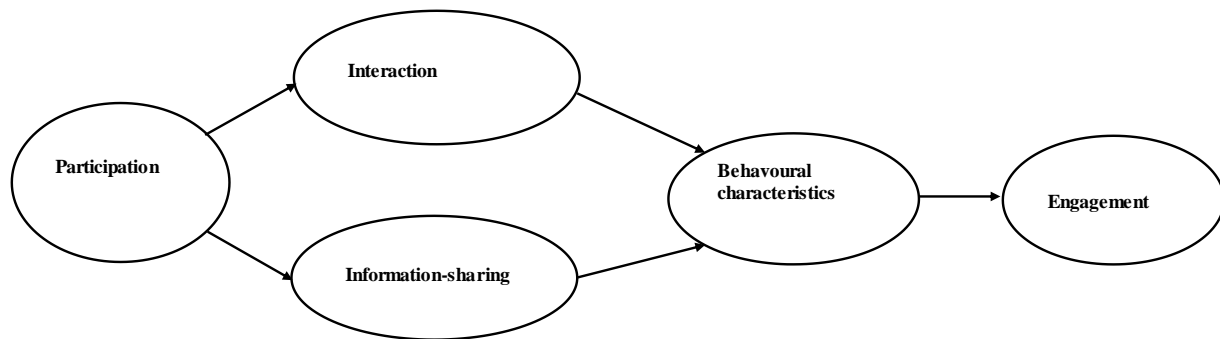
High consumer participation may provide firms with the timely information that they are looking for (Fang, 2008), which may help brands to provide better offerings to consumers (Fornell & Wernerfelt, 1987) and to develop new services in response to the feedback they have received from consumers (Von Hippel, 2009), either online or offline. Additionally, consumers with high levels of participation in online communities exhibit a high degree of involvement with the brand as well as the community, and they will search for more information (Beatty & Smith, 1987) and spend more time in the communities, which is a process that may lead to more product use (Robertson, 1976).

Lego Ideas (2017) invites participants to come up with their own idea, which is selected and awarded if it is liked by other users and the brands in the creation process. Such activities, which are based on customer participation, are popular, and “My Starbucks Idea” is another example. The website is on Starbucks’ own social network and it is a place where customers around the world can post their suggestions on how to improve the Starbucks experience, discuss these suggestions, and vote on each other’s ideas. Starbucks management then considers highly popular suggestions for implementation. As Starbucks (2012) puts it: “You know better than anyone else what you want from Starbucks. So, tell us. What is your Starbucks idea? Revolutionary or simple—we want to hear it.” Active participation in such activities influences customers’ interaction, as they share information and become involved in both in the current process and in subsequent engagement with the resulting product, as well as the company. MSI argues that, “The brand engages prospects and customers by identifying itself with their common interests” (2006, p. 4). Therefore, organizations get consumers to participate with the brand and with each other through brand communities by providing platforms for interactions that meet the relevant needs of consumers, which is more likely to engage them.

Hence:

H1: Higher levels of customer participation produce higher levels of consumer engagement.

Figure 5: The relationship between participation and engagement



Source: Author’s representation from Vivek et al., (2012)

2.8.3 Loyalty

Loyalty has been discussed in the literature of different disciplines by researchers, such as Anderson (1991) in sociology, Boszormenyi-Nagy and Spark (1984: xix) in psychology, and Shklar (1993) in political science. In relationship marketing, loyalty is conceptualized into behavioural loyalty and attitudinal loyalty (Jacoby & Kyner, 1973). Behavioural loyalty is a situation where consumers will continue to purchase products or services from the same supplier. Attitudinal loyalty refers to consumers' commitment or preferences when considering the unique values associated with a brand (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Engaged consumers exhibit both types of loyalty in the form of their future purchase intentions, buying patterns, and commitment to the product. This is because their motivation and purchase behaviour towards the product is already positive as they are engaged with the brand through different channels, such as social media platforms, brand communities, etc. As they have gone through a process that has taken them from participation to engagement, their loyalty is strengthened by positive brand-related behaviour in online brand communities.

Engagement can lead to brand loyalty through brand community activities. Brand loyalty is described as “the biased behavioural response expressed over time by some decision-making unit, with respect to one or more alternative brands out of set of such brands, as a function of evaluative psychological process” (Jacoby & Chestnut, 1978, pp. 80–81). Brand loyalty is trust that originates from a strong commitment to consistently repurchase or patronize a preferred product or service (Oliver, 1999). Enhancing consumers' brand loyalty is an ongoing concern for many marketers (Andreassen, 1999). If consumers are strongly loyal to a specific company, then it will gain important competitive advantages, which include reduced marketing and transactional costs, an increased cross-selling rate, positive word-of-mouth, and a reduced cost of failure (Griffin, 1996). Brand loyalty is a positive behavioural manifestation towards customers' favoured brands and such positive behavioural expressions develop because of the past relationship between consumers and the brand, during which consumers go through different evaluative psychological processes. Therefore, brand loyalty can be referred to as having both psychological and behavioural components.

Customer engagement and brand loyalty have different characteristics in the sense that engagement is a relational concept and comes before a customer becomes loyal to a brand. In that sense, engagement does not follow comparative brand evaluation and behavioural decision-making regarding a transaction or repurchase (Vivek et al., 2012). Customer engagement has a

foundation in relational marketing and it is significant because of its theoretical foundation, whereas loyalty is a relationship outcome in the form of repeat purchase, retention, and outcome behaviour (Verhoef et al., 2010).

As mentioned before, loyalty is related to customer transactions and repurchase, whereas customer purchase does not confirm customers' engagement. At the same time, the measurement rule for loyalty is customer purchase and transaction. On the other hand, engagement (i.e., affective, cognitive, and behavioural) characteristics are related to customer experience in relationships not founded on exchange and transaction (Vivek et al., 2014). Brand community engagement among members has nothing to do with how much they paid for the product or their transactional history.

Previous research (e.g., Vivek et al., 2012; Wirtz et al., 2013; Hollebeek, 2011; Kumar & Pansari, 2016; Hollebeek et al., 2016; Gummerus et al., 2012; Brodie et al., 2013; Islam, Rahman, & Hollebeek, 2017) examining the consequences of engagement in relationship marketing literature states the fact that there is a positive relationship between consumers' engagement and the engagement outcome (i.e., loyalty). Most of the authors on consumer engagement emphasize the psychological and behavioural components of engagement, in which higher commitment and loyalty are an outcome of customers' relationship with the brand. Some researchers emphasize the fact that psychologically engaged online brand community members exhibit higher commitment and loyalty (Bowden, 2009; Clader et al., 2013, 2016) and that they are more likely to visit physical and online stores and to generate more positive word-of-mouth (Hutter et al., 2013).

Most of the research explains that both the psychological and behavioural components of engagement have a higher effect on relationship outcomes (Brodie et al., 2013; Wirtz et al., 2013; Hollebeek et al., 2016). Members of brand communities share strong bonds and emotional attachments, higher levels of enthusiasm and intrinsic motivation, and identify more with the brand than those outside such communities who are not fans of the brand (Islam, Rahman, & Hollebeek, 2017; Dholakia & Durham, 2010; Dessart et al., 2015). As a result, engaged consumers demonstrate both attitudinal and behavioural loyalty towards brands they are associated with, and brand communities function as a medium by which to achieve such outcomes. Research published before the popularity of user-generated content (i.e., Web 2.0) and the popularity of engagement shows a positive relationship between engagement and loyalty (Algesheimer, Dholakia,

Herrmann, 2005; Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006; Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Cyr et al., 2009; Howard & Sheth, 1969; Jang et al., 2008; Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001; Shang et al., 2006; Tyebjee, 1977). In addition, research also finds that loyalty is a key factor in achieving company success and long-term sustainability (Casalo et al., 2007; Flavian et al., 2006; Keating et al., 2003), which suggests that engagement leading to loyalty should be considered an optimal consumer behaviour for a company.

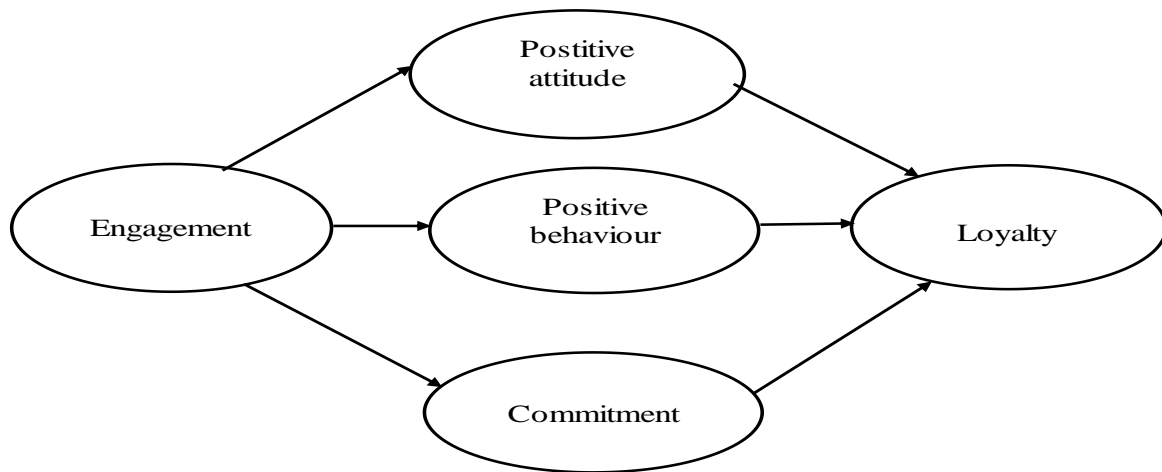
In this way, engagement and loyalty are different in nature as engagement precedes loyalty. However, they are interrelated concepts, as engaged customers exhibit strong psychological and behavioural connections with a brand, company, and community members, which strengthens their psychological processes and can increase the likelihood of positive behavioural manifestations for the brand or organization (Jacoby & Chestnut, 1978) in the form of purchase.

Customer engagement and its relationship with loyalty can be analysed by comparing the loyalty process with the classic hierarchy-of-effects concept of loyalty proposed by Oliver (1999). As proposed by Oliver (1999), the classic hierarchy-of-effects theory argues that customers go through a process before becoming loyal to a brand and purchasing their offerings. They collect information and form a belief, then apply their belief to form attitude, and finally come up with a behavioural decision, which depends on how strong or weak their attitude strength is. When compared to engaged consumers in the brand community context, their shift from one step to another occurs very quickly, as engaged customers' belief to attitude and attitude to behaviour transformation is faster. At the same time, an engaged customer is likely to develop a positive and strong attitude towards the brand community of his/her association, which can make him/her more loyal towards brand. Recent studies by Brodie et al., (2013), Robert and Alpert (2010), Vivek et al., (2014, 2018), Hollebeek (2016), Kumar and Pansari (2016), Islam, Rahman, and Hollebeek (2017), Maslowska et al., (2016), Kim et al., (2016) and Malthouse et al., (2016) also state the fact that loyalty is a consequence of customer engagement.

Hence:

H2: Higher levels of engagement produce higher levels of loyalty.

Figure 6: The relationship between engagement and loyalty



Source: Author's representation from Oliver (1999)

2.8.4 Word-of-mouth

The literature on online brand communities shows that consumer engagement among community members enhance customers' WoM intentions (S. Ray et al., 2014; Wu, J., et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2016) and that there is a positive relationship between community engagement and word-of-mouth intentions. The importance of customer-to-customer interaction in marketing emerged as an important tool for marketers to promote their products and services. Hence, marketers placed a high importance on understanding the antecedents and consequences of customer-to-customer interaction. After both marketers and academics realized the importance of such interactions, the concept emerged in the form of WoM, as validated by the Word-of-Mouth Marketing Association (Libai et al., 2010). In the beginning, the concept was an informal oral conversation between two customers about a brand. However, as new technology emerged online, customers started to interact in different ways through social networking sites, online communities, and recommendation sites (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010). This was made possible by the arrival of user generated content (i.e., Web 2.0 features) in the worldwide web, which seemed impossible when the internet was in its early stages.

As a result of these developments, different customer-to-customer-related interactions about brands started taking place in these networks. This became a topic of high importance for marketers and academics, who went on to explore and to empirically investigate the possible antecedents and consequences of such interactions, in the form of word-of-mouth, that create value within the customer-brand relationship (Libai et al., 2010). Although the word-of-mouth concept existed in the marketing environment, it was viewed as being a promotional device (Bone, 1995). Considered from a positive aspect, and with respect to an era of relationship marketing that is not internet oriented, word-of-mouth may include “relating pleasant, vivid, or novel experiences; recommendations to others; and even conspicuous display” (Anderson, 1998). The significance of word-of-mouth has increased tremendously in the online world (De Valck et al., 2009).

Today’s digital technology features effective social networks, fast and powerful internet services, active online brand communities, and effective communications services among its engagement objects. Customer feedback, content, and recommendations (either negative or positive) travel fast and can reach large number of users and audiences, which means that much less time, effort, and money is needed for marketing activities, such as customer retention (Kumar and Pansari, 2016; Brodie et al., 2013; Doorn et al., 2010).

Word-of-mouth in the traditional marketing environment was limited to the users of a brand or services and referred to the way in which they expressed their likes and dislikes about a product or brand. However, in the era of internet and digital development, the concept changed, as was defined by Hennig-Thurau et al., (2004) who explained that word-of-mouth in the online context took the form of “any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet.”

In the online brand community context, WoM activities are related to members’ responses towards the use of brands, the features of brands, or their attitude towards the brands as expressed in the form of reviewing, blogging, making suggestions regarding product use, and helping other members (Kumar et al., 2016). In the social media context, helping, making suggestions about brands or products’ positive features, and complaining behaviour are also very significant in both social networks and online brand community platforms, as members can influence each other through such activities (Wu, J., et al., 2017).

In the context of brand communities, engaged customers become very active and provide feedback, share their experiences, and ask other members brand-related questions. Moreover, in the case of their positive experiences with the brand community and engagement, members are more likely to be involved in voluntarily spreading positive word-of-mouth about the brand among community members on social media platforms and even in the offline environment as well. Such behaviours of engaged customers can go beyond purchase and transaction and can take the form of writing positive feedback and reviews, recommending products/the brand to other users, rating their experiences and uses of the brand on brand community pages and offline, which might also help other members who participate in the brand community's activities to use the brand (Van Doorn et al., 2010).

Traditional word-of-mouth activities were limited to what customers thought (i.e., either positive or negative) about a product and there were only limited channels/platforms, such as physical customer interactions and complaining directly to the brand (Rehman et al., 2016). However, today there are many channels/touch points available in both the offline and online worlds, such as social media and online brand communities, etc. Hence, word-of-mouth activities travel very fast. Marketers are concerned about this and want to know how the different dimensions of engagement (i.e., affective, cognitive, and behavioural) influence customer behaviours of purchase and word-of-mouth behaviours in the online as well as the offline environment (Bolton, 2011).

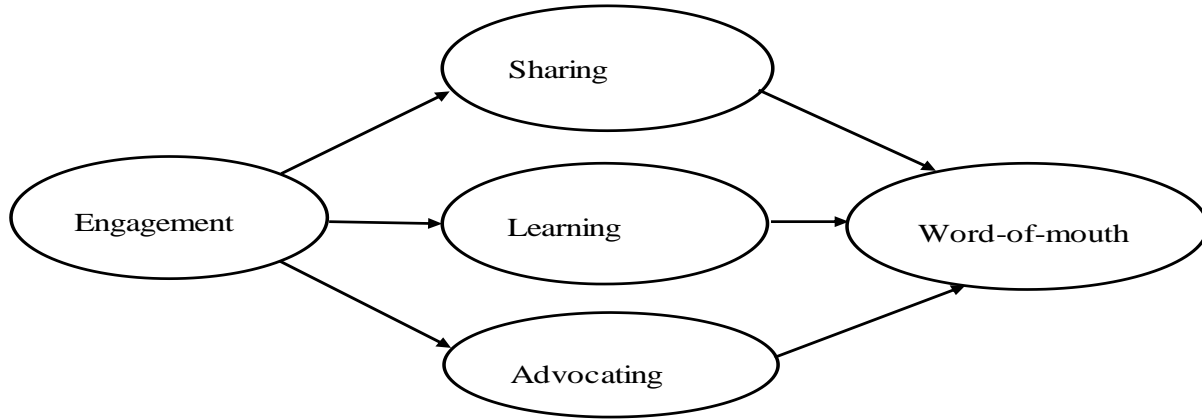
Several previous research studies support the fact that customers' online word-of-mouth activities are positively related to the off-line environment as well (Chatterjee, 2001). Engaged customers' brand-related activities in these communities can be translated to other platforms, such as social media platforms and the offline context as well.

Research published by Hollebeek and Chen (2014) provided sufficient explanation of the fact that word-of-mouth is one of the consequences and major relationship outcomes of customer engagement. This is also supported by the recent research of Brodie et al., (2013), Vivek et al., (2014) and Wu, J et al., (2017). Cheung, Lee, and Jin (2011) and Kumar et al., (2016) further reinforce the fact that engagement makes customers endorse, advocate, share information, and learn from the interactions and knowledge gained about brands in an online community. Engaged online community members interact more and spread positive word-of-mouth, which may influence customers.

Hence:

H3: Higher levels of engagement produce higher levels of word-of-mouth.

Figure 7: The relationship between engagement and word-of-mouth



Source: Author's representation from Brodie et al., (2013)

2.8.5 Participation and word-of-mouth

Participation begins with interaction and information-sharing and may develop into involvement, recommendation, or commitment. If participation encourages involvement, it will lead to engagement; if participation encourages recommendation, it will lead to word-of-mouth; and if participation encourages commitment, it will lead to loyalty. However, the process of participation encouraging involvement and leading to engagement results in higher loyalty and word-of-mouth.

Thanks to social media, users' and online communities' activities are growing every day. The quest to know about customers in the virtual world is ever growing. In the context of social media, there is a 90-9-1 rule that denotes the three types of social media user in terms of consumption: these are lurkers, content contributors, and power users (LinkedIn, 2016). The first type of user's participation represents most of the population and a low level of participation. These users simply use social media but never like, comment, or share content. The second type is content contributors, who infrequently create their own content and prefer to share, like, and comment on others' posts. Finally, the third type regularly post content and are involved in posting, sharing,

and commenting activities. It is important to appreciate that these three types are equally important. The first type of user knows the brand, but their personal information is unknown. Active users in the digital world can make a big difference for brands. Active users may participate in online brand community activities with the members of brands and help to spread word-of-mouth by sharing and generating content for other users and other community members as well.

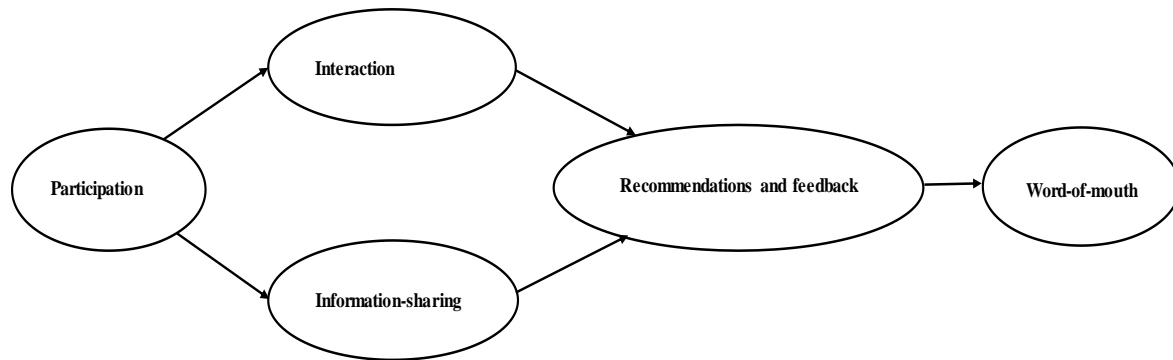
Previous studies on participation suggest that there is a positive relationship between brand community participation and word-of-mouth (Zhou, 2012). The number of individuals participating in online platforms and brand communities is increasing day by day, as mentioned in the previous section, which means that there are more opportunities for individuals to interact with other members and to influence other users of the brands (Kelley & Alden, 2016).

Participation also means “taking part in” or “contributing to” some specific activity or event (Barki & Hartwick, 1989, 1994; Vroom & Jago, 1988). Customer participation is likely to strengthen the ties between a firm and its customers, or the ties between community members and members of certain brands. Individuals participating in brand communities, for example, have been shown to feel more closely integrated into the brand (Dholakia et al., 2009; Libai et al., 2010; McAlexander, Schouten & Koenig, 2002; Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001). Active participation, such as a willingness to provide critical feedback and guidance, strengthens the links between customers and companies. In the context of social networking and online brand communities, users and community members post, share, and comment, etc., their ideas, either with the company or among themselves, which can influence them to become involved and to integrate themselves with members of the community and participate word-of-mouth activities for the brand. As discussed before, participation is the level of customer involvement associated with producing or delivering a service (Dabholkar, 1990; Vivek, 2017). Social network theory (i.e., the study of how people, organizations, or groups interact with others inside their network) identifies the customer level of involvement as influencing word-of-mouth behaviour, which is also confirmed by various empirical studies (Richins & Bloch, 1991; Wangenheim & Bayon, 2007; Lee et al., 2011). A higher level of interest and knowledge makes highly involved customers talk more about a brand than customers who are not highly involved (Islam and Rehman, 2016).

Hence:

H4: Higher levels of participation produce higher levels of loyalty but lower than engagement.

Figure 8: The relationship between participation and word-of-mouth



Source: Author's representation from Barki & Hartwick (1989, 1994), Vroom & Jago (1988) and Vivek et al., (2012)

2.8.6 Participation and loyalty

Participation is the level of involvement required to produce a brand or service. As has been mentioned in the previous sections, customers participate with the brand and other members through different channels, such as social media platforms and via online community platforms, etc. Users' participation levels vary according to their level of activity with the object of participation. In the case of the online environment (i.e., social media platforms or online brand community platforms), it is very difficult to identify users' activities because their participation level in most of the cases remains very low. However, brand enthusiasts interact, share information, and like to connect with users both online and offline. Many studies have found a positive link between participation and loyalty (Algesheimer et al., 2006; Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006; Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001; Zhou, 2012). They believe this is because when consumers who are brand enthusiasts participate in online platforms (i.e., social platforms or brand community platforms) with other users and other brand members, they develop an increased connection to the brand, which may lead to brand commitment and, eventually, loyalty (Casalo et al., 2007; Koh & Kim, 2004).

According to self-perception theory (Bem, 1972), people observe their own behaviour and therefore determine their own attitude. Participation in brand communities is performed as a form

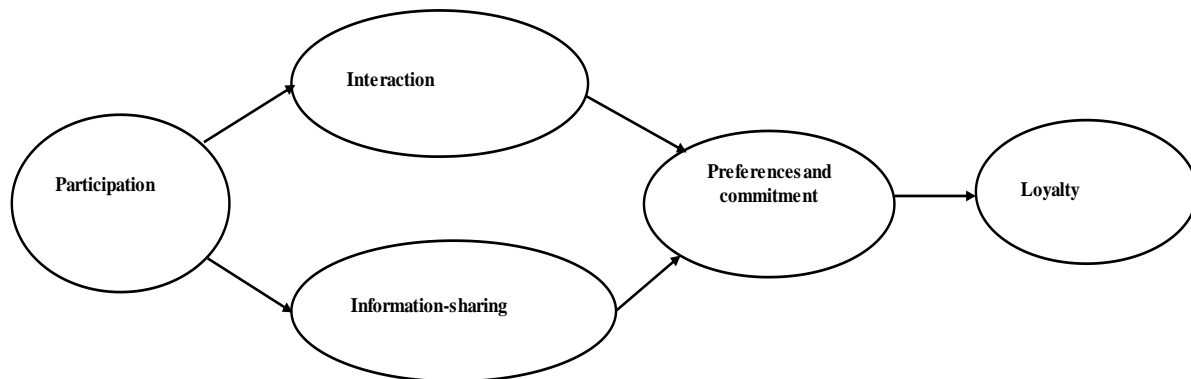
of public commitment. The members of brand communities share an intrinsic connection with other members, in comparison with other outside members, that makes them more committed to the brand and the company, and more likely to develop favourable attitudes (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001).

For example, Lego has long seen the value of co-creating with customers both young and old. Lego has an online community known as Lego Ideas where members can discover cool creations made by other fans and submit their own designs for new sets. Fans can also vote on submissions and give feedback. If a project gets 10,000 votes, Lego reviews the idea and picks a winner whose idea will be created and sold worldwide. The creator gives the product final approval, earns a percentage of the sales, and is recognized as being the creator on all the packaging and marketing (Milbarth, 2016). As a result, participation in online brand communities is likely to lead the development of brand loyalty. Researchers such as Brodie et al., (2013), Vivek et al., (2014) and Helbeck (2016) suggest that participation is one of the antecedents of loyalty.

Hence:

H5: Higher levels of participation produce higher levels of loyalty but lower than engagement.

Figure 9: The relationship between participation and loyalty



Source: Author’s representation from Bagozzi & Dholaki (2006), Muniz & O’Guinn (2001), Zhou (2012), and Vivek et al., (2012)

2.9.1 Knowledge gap

Firstly, the literature suggests that engagement can be exhibited either behaviourally, cognitively, and affectively, or in a combination of all three, in a context- dependent relationship either between consumers and companies or consumers and other consumers. The focus of the engagement subject (e.g., company or consumers, community, etc.,) can vary according to the context (e.g., online, offline, etc.,). In addition, the previous research focus has been on engagement between consumers and companies, and the engagement characteristics identified in such relationships were found to be varied and to have no consistency between the behavioural, cognitive, and affective. Hence, there is a need to explore consistent engagement characteristics and engagement focus between consumers in user generated online brand communities.

Secondly, although social media marketing in online communities has become the norm today, many organizations struggle to employ social media for effective marketing communication function, especially when it comes to keeping customers engaged (Sklar, 2013), to achieve greater business outcomes, such as loyalty and word-of-mouth. Previous literature focuses on engagement between brands or consumers and the related relationship outcomes (Dessart et al., 2015; Kumar et al., 2016). Marketers' focus has also been on engaging consumers (Brodie et al., 2013; Vivek et al., 2017; Rehman et al., 2016) via the interaction between company and consumers.

In the past, participation was used interchangeably with engagement (Dessart et al., 2015). However, the extant literature suggests that it only carries the behavioural components of engagement and that there needs to be further explanation of the relationship context in online brand communities. Engagement can lead to relationship consequences, such as loyalty and word-of-mouth, in relation to the interpretative experience that takes place between consumers and a brand or brand community (Brodie et al., 2013). Once again, more evidence is needed in the context of online brand communities. The research on participation with engagement and loyalty, in the context of virtual communities, has not been explored. The literature identified a positive relationship between participation and engagement and its consequences in terms of loyalty and word-of-mouth (e.g. Vivek et al., 2012; Brodie et al., 2013; Hollebeek et al., 2016; Dessart et al.,

2015). However, the issue of participation and engagement influencing loyalty and word-of-mouth, and what the characteristics of participation and engagement are in relation to the characteristics of loyalty and word-of-mouth in online brand communities, are still to be the subject of research.

Although the extant literature identified positive links between relationships as discussed in this section, marketing managers need a better understanding of positive financial and business outcomes, such as loyalty, satisfaction, word-of-mouth, purchase intention, profitability, etc. They will gain this by understanding consumers' participation and engagement behaviour with their peers in online brand communities, which will, in turn, make their investments pay and increase returns. However, the way in which relationships in online brand communities unfold is still a big question. Academic and empirical evidence that suggests how an individual's participation and engagement influences their loyalty and word-of-mouth activities in online brand communities is still lacking (Vivek et al., 2014, 2016).

A theoretical model (see Figure 10) has been developed by the researcher from his understanding of the current knowledge gap on engagement dimensions and their relationship with constructs (e.g., participation, loyalty, and word-of-mouth) in online brand communities. This has been formed as a result of his research into engagement in marketing; the theoretical model will be tested in the section that follows. This research proposes the following five hypotheses that will be tested using a theoretical model developed and presented in this chapter (see Figure 10):

***H1** Higher levels of participation produce higher levels of engagement.*

***H2** Higher levels of engagement produce higher levels of loyalty.*

***H3** Higher levels of engagement produce higher levels of word-of-mouth.*

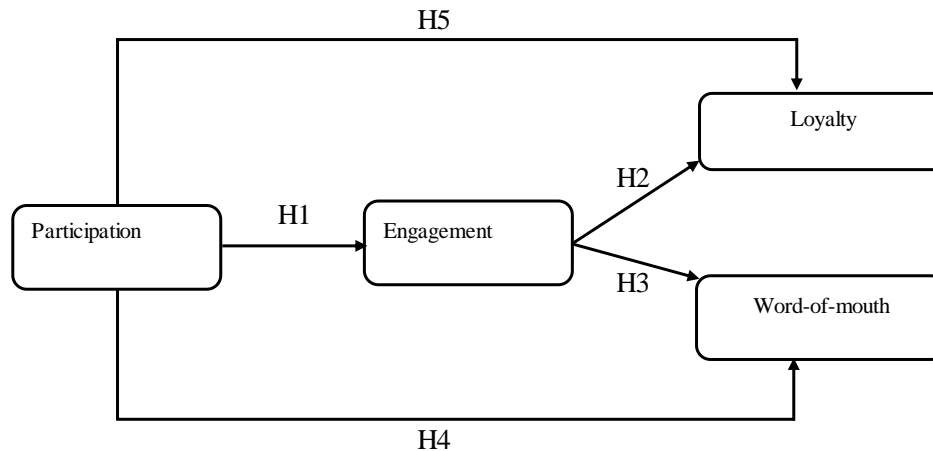
***H4** Higher levels of participation produce higher levels of loyalty, but lower than engagement.*

***H5** Higher levels of participation produce higher levels of word-of-mouth, but lower than engagement.*

Moreover, this theoretical model also predicts that the direct relationship of participation without the mediation of engagement will result in lower levels of loyalty and word-of-mouth, whereas the

indirect relationship of participation mediated by engagement will result in higher loyalty and word-of-mouth (see Figure 11).

Figure 10: Consumer engagement theoretical model



Author's representation from Vivek et al., (2012)

2.10.1 Summary

This chapter first focused on the theoretical link between engagement and relationship marketing, before reviewing engagement dimensions from the extant consumer engagement literature. This identified that previous studies on engagement dimensions ranged from single to multi-dimensional concepts with no conformity regarding its characteristics. Most of the recent studies conceptualized engagement from a multidimensional perspective with an engagement focus on the brand. However, it was found that there were limited studies on engagement dimensionality in user generated online brand communities. This study has adopted the multi-dimensional definitions of consumer engagement proposed by Brodie et al., (2013) to define consumer engagement and its dimensions in the user generated brand community environment.

Secondly, this chapter focused on the development of brand communities and their categories, changing consumer behaviour, and social influence theory in online brand communities.

Thirdly, this chapter presented a theoretical model as proposed by Vivek et al., (2012) to test the interrelationship and consequences of participation, engagement, loyalty, and word-of-mouth as potential antecedents and consequences in the user generated online brand community context.

The next chapter focuses on the philosophical assumptions and methodological choices made to test the theoretical model. It will explore engagement dimensions and their consequences in user generated online brand communities.

Chapter Three

Research Methodology and Research Design

This section opens with an explanation of the preferred methodological choices and research design for this study, which are chosen after considering the nature of this study's research aims, objectives, and research questions. To be very specific, this section of the research justifies the reasons for choosing mixed methods research and discusses the advantages and likely weaknesses of choosing a mixed methods approach.

Recourse to extant literature makes clear the fact that mixed methods research is frequently used as a methodological tool in social science; namely, in sociology, education, health science, economics, etc., (Bryman, 2005). In comparison, areas of study such as management, accounting, and finance have always emphasized and applied positivism to their research in the past. However, many recent studies in these research areas have increasingly prioritized the application of multiple methods for understanding the same phenomenon (e.g., Casselletal, 2006; Laughlin, 1995; Modell, 2005, 2009, 2010). Considering the research priority is to use multiple methods as a methodological tool by which to explore the phenomenon of human behaviour in the changed internet-related scenario, this research uses a mixed method approach to explore the research question: How does consumer engagement enhance loyalty and word-of-mouth in user generated brand communities? Since the research at hand follows a philosophical range that falls between two school of thoughts, the researcher therefore aims to answer his research question by being in the middle and combining both qualitative and quantitative research approaches in this study.

3.1 Philosophical assumptions and methodology

A research methodology is defined as “the overall approach to the research process, from the theoretical underpinning to the collection and analysis of the data” (Collis & Hussey, 2003). Researchers use research methodologies to investigate the researcher's area of interest or, to be specific, a research topic (Silverman, 2000).

A researcher's choice of methodology depends on the philosophical suppositions that he/she has regarding ontology, human nature, and epistemology (Collis & Hussey, 2003; Morgan & Smircich, 1980; Gill & Johnson, 2002) and the nature of the research problem that the researcher seeks to

address through his/her research investigation process (Collis & Hussey, 2003). The following section discusses the possible philosophical suppositions of the three dimensions of ontology, human nature, and epistemology.

3.1.2 Ontology and human nature

Social scientists make some assumptions about ontology and human nature in relation to the world and human beings, and they form these views on assumptions that provide the basis for developing social theories and maintaining several viewpoints, in relation to epistemology and methodology (Morgan & Smircich, 1980).

Ontological assumptions are related to a key question i.e., what the nature of reality is (Creswell, 1994). On the other hand, assumptions about human nature are related to the part and role that the researcher plays (Laughlin, 1995). Some researchers in the social sciences consider human nature as one of the aspects of ontology and explain it from a broader perspective; namely, “the ideas about the existence of and relationship between people, society and the world in general” (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008).

In simple terms, the argument is about the existence of reality. The school of thought (i.e., objectivist) that considers reality as being objective argues that human beings are the product of an external reality and that they have no influence on the outcome of this reality. The other school of thought (i.e., subjectivist) believes that human beings influence the outcome of reality through their experience, which supports the subjective notion of reality (Morgan & Smircich, 1980). The first type, which supports objective characteristics of reality, is related to objectivism and the second type is related to subjectivism or constructionism.

From the objectivist point of view, regarding ontology about social reality, reality is not dependent on social actors or environments, which is “a hard, concrete, real thing, and objective phenomenon that leads itself to accurate observation and measurement” (Morgan & Smircich, 1980). Hence, the term “social entity” is used in association with organizations and cultures that can be examined, tested, and investigated in the same manner as researchers of physical sciences would do (Bryman, 2004; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Objectivists believe and argue that human beings have very little influence (i.e., some degree) on the process of investigating reality. Human beings are

external to reality. They are presented as being in front of external reality simply as a responding mechanism (Morgan & Smircich, 1980), which means their presence has no or very little influence on reality.

Contrary to what objectivists argue about reality, subjectivists claim that social reality is the representation of human fantasy or imagination (Morgan & Smircich, 1980). Researchers of subjective reality argue that, “Reality is masked by those human processes which judge and interpret the phenomenon in consciousness prior to a full understanding of the structure of meaning it expresses” (Morgan & Smircich, 1980, p. 494).

Subjectivists argue that there is a difference between the physical and social world and that one case does not fit all. The social world consists of human beings and they are different to animals and other physical objects. In terms of understanding and providing sense and meaning to activities, events, and feelings, emotions and expressions influence the world that humans live in (Gill & Johnson, 2002; Morgan & Smircich, 1980).

The above discussion and references to previous studies reveals that there are two perspectives about the nature of reality: subjective and objective. Both these realities exist and, true to the research in the concerned fields, the social world and nature of reality are very difficult to categorize. Morgan & Smircich (1980) argue that ontological suppositions are not like the extreme cases of subjective and objective perspectives on the reality and that they should never be judged from that perspective only.

The subjective and objective arguments about reality among social science researchers led to six types of assumptions in connection to the world and human beings being defined. The six types of reality are: reality—a projection of human imagination which relates to the subjective approach; reality—a social construction; reality—a symbolic discourse; reality—a contextual area of information; reality—a concrete process; and reality—a concrete structure by which to refer to the objectivist approach of reality (Morgan & Smircich, 1980). To conclude, one side of the argument supports an objective stance and influences the epistemological perspective of positivism, whereas the other stance supports a subjective perspective that influences phenomenological epistemology. Due to the subjective and objective extremes of ontology discussed in the previous section, in this study, the researcher takes an in-between position on the continuum of subjective and objective ontology. This position is close to the reality of symbolic discourse (i.e., objective reality) and

closer to the reality of subjective extremes as a projection of human imagination (Morgan & Smircich, 1980).

The choice of both perspectives is important for the researcher in this thesis because he identifies the presence and relevance of the physical world as being equal as to that of the social and psychological world. Moreover, the researcher accepts and believes that human beings are social actors (Morgan & Smircich, 1980; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). He also believes, as suggested by Morgan and Smircich (1980), that human beings are animals with the capacity to use their knowledge, language, experiences, and other cultural and social aspects to influence and interpret their surroundings and, in doing so, to represent the reality of the social world.

Regarding the phenomena investigated in this study; namely, engagement and participation behaviour, the researcher will primarily concentrate on investigating how people are related to the phenomenon of engagement in the context of user generated brand communities. In addition, he also believes that there may be some causal relationships between the central phenomenon (i.e., engagement with the brand and community) and other social phenomena (e.g., word-of-mouth), and he will try to identify such relationships.

3.1.3 Epistemology

Epistemology raises questions regarding the relationship between the researcher and the researched (Creswell, 1994). To simplify, epistemology is related to the process of acquiring knowledge, which must be valid knowledge (Collis & Hussey, 2003).

When we look at the assumptions of ontology and human nature and differentiate between them using epistemology, what we find is that there are two types of ontology. This means that there are two types of reality; namely, subjective and objective, which are known as subjective ontology and objective ontology, whereas epistemology is the medium by which reality (i.e., subjective or objective) is apprehended. Hence, objective ontology and subjective ontology provide two epistemological notions; namely, positive epistemology and phenomenological epistemology, which are also known as normative, interpretive epistemology (Morgan & Smircich, 1980; Collis & Hussey, 2003; Bryman, 2004).

3.1.4 Positivism

Positivism is the epistemological notion of knowledge acquisition. Positivism perceives the natural world and influences the epistemology (i.e., the relationship between researched and researcher) from the positivist perspective; namely, that a researcher must maintain a certain distance from the research. Objective ontologist, on the other hand, argue that social world is external to social reality. Positivism prioritizes the nature of constituents while forming any relationship among different components (Morgan & Smircich, 1980).

The positivist school of thought assumes that the researcher is independent of the research, as he/she does not possess any extra intelligence and knowledge about the observed, apart from observing the phenomenon and the constituents of the relationships that are formed between them. Therefore, this school of thought claims that a researcher must present himself/herself as forming an independent and objective point of view (Keat & Urry, 1982; Collis & Hussey, 2003). There are certain characteristics of epistemological positivism, as proposed by Bryman (2004), who defines positivism as being only the phenomenon in which knowledge approved by the senses is knowledge, and states that the purpose of a theory is to test a hypothesis which will allow explanations of laws, that knowledge is based on facts, which provides a basis for laws, and that science should be conducted in a value free fashion.

3.1.5 Phenomenological epistemology

Phenomenological epistemology shares the same beliefs as subjective ontology about reality and the close relationship between the researcher and the research. It values the relationship process between the researched object and the researcher and encourages human beings to build formidable relationships with their social world (Morgan & Smircich, 1980). Contrary to what positivism believes about the world, phenomenologists separate the subject matter of social science from natural science and argue that individuals and their organizations and institutions are not the same as natural science. Hence, social scientists have a responsibility to treat the subjective aspect of

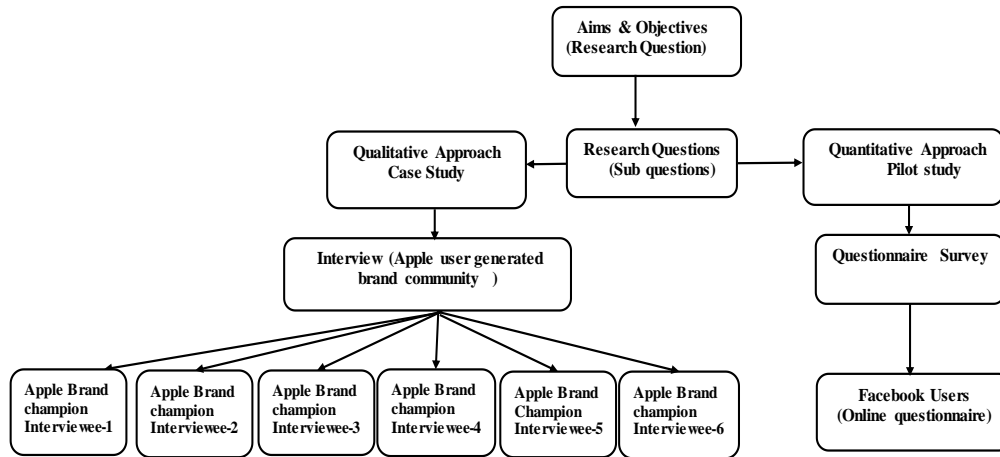
social science from a separate point of view and to use separate research (Bryman, 2004). As a result, social scientists research social phenomena between the researched and the researcher (Creswell, 1994; Collis & Hussey, 2003).

Hence, just as the researcher advocated following the middle path in his ontological propositions, he here chooses to follow the same epistemological perspective between positivism and phenomenology. He believes that reality is extracted from the world of human beings and that their experiences and feelings are very important in shaping reality (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The researcher of this study believes that understanding social reality and the contributions that human beings make to their environment are important for creating knowledge, which means that human beings are an integral part of the knowledge creation process (Morgan & Smircich, 1980). Therefore, the closer the association between the researcher and the research, the easier the knowledge creation process will be.

3.2 Methodology

Methodology is a composite approach during the research investigation process. In the social sciences, or in any sciences, researchers may have different philosophical presumptions and may prefer to use one or other approaches in their research. With reference to ontology, this constitutes both objective and subjective choices for the researcher. The argument between these schools of thought results from the tensions between the quantitative and qualitative methodological approaches.

Figure 11: The research process for this study



Source: Author's representation

3.2.1 Quantitative research method

Research with an objective ontology and positive epistemological presumptions tends to follow the quantitative research approach as a method of investigation. The quantitative research method, as defined by Creswell (2003:18), is:

One in which the investigator primarily uses post positivist claims for developing knowledge (i.e., cause and effect thinking, reduction to specific variables and hypotheses and questions, use of measurement and observation, and the test of theories), employs strategies of inquiry such as experiments and surveys, and collects data on predetermined instruments that yield statistical data.

As the definition suggests, the quantitative research method prioritizes the evaluation of data through data collection and analysis. The researcher, when using the quantitative research method, mostly uses the deductive research approach and tries to justify the relationship between existing theory and research on the concerned topic by either testing the theory or by developing hypotheses. In addition, a large sample is used for the research, which involves high quality data being extracted from the representative sample population in the field of the research topic (Collis & Hussey, 2003; Bryman, 2004).

The researcher used quantitative and qualitative research methods to collect data related to this study. The researcher utilized both quantitative and qualitative techniques in the sampling and data collection procedures, which is the quantitative aspect of the study, and the information design via

interviews, which is the qualitative research perspective of the study. The next section provides an introduction as to how the survey was designed and describes how a pre-test was carried out with a focus group. Finally, this section concludes with the operational justification of each of the variables used for this study (i.e., the variables used to measure the relationship between the constructs in the engagement model).

3.2.2 Quantitative data collection

The instruments of the survey were carried out both online and offline. Surveys are well suited to the context of collecting data from participants with instruments related to varieties of participant's behaviour in different contexts (Negrine & Newbold, 1998). Consumers' behaviours vary in different situations and surveys function as one of the best research approaches by which to identify consumer behaviour (Bostrom, 1998). In surveys, the researchers apply varieties of questions related to the research problem and "estimate the distribution of characteristics in a sample" (Dillman, 2000, p. 9). Moreover, surveys also present empirical evidence in the form of data, which can either support or negate the proposed hypotheses (Negrine & Newbold, 1998). In addition, surveys are conducted to "describe, find, or validate" the argument presented in the research question through proposed hypotheses (Reagan, 2006, p. 92). This study employed a survey to understand consumer behaviour, and specifically consumer engagement behaviour in online brand communities on Facebook. Moreover, this study sought to validate relationships within the proposed online consumer engagement framework and to lend support to the hypotheses proposed in this research.

There are some steps that were followed when developing the survey instrument. The first and most important step was to conduct a thorough literature review to have a pilot survey. As Reagan (2006) suggests, a comprehensive literature review on the research area sets the ground for the initial survey development and is necessary to recognize constructs and their relationships with their measuring variables before the formal design for the pilot study gets underway. The next stage is to form a focus group and pre-test the survey with individuals who could suggest to the researcher any suggestions or modifications that could be made to the survey. Negrine & Newbold (1998) argue that a pre-test helps to "iron out many of the potential difficulties with which the researcher, who is bound up intimately with the subject, cannot always anticipate" (p. 247).

In addition, Reagan (2006) and Negrine & Newbold (1998) state that a researcher only needs a small sample of participants to pre-test a survey. In this study, a convenience sample of 20 participants, consisting of Abertay college students, staff, and the researcher's colleagues, pre-tested the survey. The participants taking part in the pre-test must have "followed" a company on Facebook in order to ensure that they met the same requirements that the participants in this study would ultimately have to meet. The participants completed the survey in person and were asked to take notes on question coherency and understanding, the flow of the questionnaire, the technical mechanics of the survey, length of the survey, and grammar (Wimmer & Dominick, 2003). Based on the participants' feedback from the pre-test, the survey was modified. First, several page breaks and a progress bar were inserted to ensure the flow and usability of the questionnaire. Second, the wording of questions and responses were modified to enhance clarity.

The study employed a sample of participants who were aged 18 years old or older, UK residents, and who followed brand communities on Facebook. Participants had to be at least 18 years old because, at 18, an individual is an adult who can oversee their own engagement behaviour in brand communities. As this study was concerned with engagement in online brand communities on Facebook, participants had to demonstrate their mental, physical, behavioural, and social involvement in such communities. Furthermore, the sample was collected in the UK because statistics show Facebook to be the leading social media platform in the United Kingdom as ranked by market share, which is almost 75% (Statista, 2017). In fact, according marketers, the UK has over 33.9 million Facebook users, which is more than 50% of the UK population (E marketers, 2017). Additionally, Facebook is the environment in which online consumer engagement was to be explored in this study; therefore, it was appropriate to collect data from Facebook users who follow brand communities on Facebook.

This research uses the snowball sampling technique to collect survey responses. Wimmer & Dominick (2003) prefer the snowball technique, which depends on referrals made by the research subjects (i.e., participants). The reasoning behind the snowball technique is that it aims to collect participants who are knowledgeable and interested in the research who then suggest other potential participants for the research (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

The collection of the sample happens because of the referrals "made among people who share or know of others who possess some characteristics that are of research interest" (Biernacki &

Waldorf, 1981, p. 141). In the context of this research, Facebook users from various groups and with different characters come together to share their traits and knowledge via online brand communities. It is well accepted that the snowball technique is used quite frequently in quantitative surveys and it is further stated that a snowball sample can “obtain evidence about individuals whose experiences are relevant to the study’s purpose” (Henry, 2009). In addition, Baltar et al., (2012), in their recent research on the snowball technique, find that the snowball technique fits perfectly with social networks (e.g., Facebook). The research by Mazman and Usluel (2010) on the use of Facebook in education also found a positive use of snowball technique in online surveys. Their survey on Facebook researched more than 600 hundred completed responses. They posted the survey on the Facebook, shared the link with their friends and requested that the participants in the study forwarded the survey link to other potential participants. Similarly, Hyllegard et al., (2012) adopted the snowball technique to investigate how women from different groups of generations differ in terms of their company linking on Facebook.

Mazman and Usluel (2010) used more than 400 subjects for their online survey. They posted the survey link on their personal profiles and requested that friends forward the link to other Facebook users and through email accounts, which proved to be a useful technique in social networks. Furthermore, given that snowball sampling is a suitable approach to use when studying social networks, it was an appropriate approach for the current study as Facebook is an online social network. Similarly, Baltar et al., (2012) also found that the snowball technique, when used in a virtual environment (e.g., Facebook) has a higher response rate than traditional methods, because the researcher’s personal information, as shown on Facebook, gives the participants confidence.

3.2.3 Quantitative methods of data analysis

The following section first uses factor loading and confirmatory factor analysis is then carried out to select the factors that meet the required value for the model test.

3.2.4 Factor analysis

Factor analysis defines the latent structure among the variables in the study and it is an interrelated technique (Hair et al., 2006; Mazzocchi, 2008). As a multivariate statistical technique, it helps to reduce the information from a multiple variable into a compact subsets or factors (Hair et al., 2003; Mazzocchi, 2008). Factor analysis is considered as a basis for structural equation modelling and multiple regression analysis (Hair et al., 2006). As a multivariate technique, it exhibits the characteristics of observed measures in a scale, unlike the structure of non-observed latent variables or factors, and the items in the scale must be metric and correlated. The factors explain the total variance of the scale and are placed in descending order according to their impact on the overall scale. One of the main objectives of factor analysis is to recognize as many factors as possible and to explain what they signify.

Factor analysis seeks to discover common factors. The technique for extracting factors attempts to take out as much common variance as possible in the first factor. Subsequent factors are, in turn, intended to account for the maximum amount of the remaining common variance until, hopefully, no common variance remains. Direct extraction methods obtain the factor matrix directly from the correlation matrix by the application of specific mathematical models. Most factor analysts agree that direct solutions are not sufficient. Adjustment to the frames of reference by rotation methods improves the interpretation of factor loadings by reducing some of the ambiguities that accompany the preliminary analysis (Child, 1990). The process of manipulating the reference axes is known as rotation.

3.2.5 Confirmatory factor analysis

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is a technique used to test the measured variables in terms of how each of the measured variables complement constructs (Hair et al., 2006). It provides factors for each variable that load either higher or lower and it is the responsibility of the researcher to choose the factor with the highest loading before testing the model (Hair et al., 2006). CFA also allows the researcher to check whether factors complement what is argued in the data. This enables the researcher to approve or disprove a theory derived from the extant literature. The researcher uses the measured items and links them to the set of constructs, and CFA helps to hypothesize the relationship between constructs and variables or between constructs and constructs (Hair et al., 2006,).

CFA is used to demonstrate factor loading, covariance and correlation, to test the measurement theory based on covariance between all the measured factors, and to present a basis for theory testing (Hair et al., 2006). CFA allows the researcher to test whether a hypothesised relationship between the observed variables and their underlying latent construct(s) exists. The researcher uses knowledge of theory, empirical research, or both, to postulate the relationship pattern a priori and then tests the hypothesis statistically. In addition, the use of CFA is dependent on certain requirements being met, such as sufficient sample size (e.g., 5-20 cases per parameter estimate), measurement instruments, multivariate normality, parameter identification, outliers, missing data, and the interpretation of model fit indices (Schumacker & Lomax, 1996).

The work of psychologists searching for a neat and tidy description of human intellectual abilities led to the development of factor analytic methods. Galton, a scientist during the 19th and 20th centuries, laid the foundations for factor analytic methods by developing quantitative methods to determine the interdependence between two variables. Karl Pearson was the first to define factor analysis. In 1902, Macdonnell was the first to publish an application of factor analysis: a comparison of the physical characteristics of 3,000 criminals and 1,000 Cambridge undergraduates. Factor analysis could be described as orderly simplification of interrelated measures. Traditionally, factor analysis has been used to explore the possible underlying structure of a set of interrelated variables without imposing any preconceived structure on the outcome (Child, 1990). By performing exploratory factor analysis (EFA), the number of constructs and the underlying factor structure can be identified.

3.2.6 Structural Equation Modelling

Structural equation modelling (SEM) is a powerful statistical analytical technique that is one of the most complicated techniques for quantitative data analysis (Shook et al., 2004). The use of SEM goes back to the early 20th century and it is used to measure the relationships between latent (i.e., unobserved) variables (Goldstein, 2006).

Hair et al., (2006) describe SEM as being a combination of statistical models that tries to justify the relationships between several variables and to investigate the patterns of a relationship as presented in the sequences of equations, such as multiple regression equations. In addition, SEM combines both the interdependence and dependence techniques (Hair et al., 2006). They further

suggest that the uniqueness of SEM lies in the fact that the variables have a changing nature: a dependent variable can become an independent variable in the dependence relationship among the variables, which makes these variables interdependent in SEM. SEM is a special statistical technique in multivariate data analysis for three main reasons:

- It facilitates the assessment of various interconnected/interrelated dependence relationships
- It allows for the assessment of unobserved (i.e., latent) variables that cannot be measured directly
- It enables a model to be justified

Structural equation modelling is adopted to test the research model described in the literature. Structural equation modelling tests a “series of relationships simultaneously while providing statistical efficiency” (Hair et al., 1992, 2016). As discussed before, this study examines the relationship between different constructs and tests the relationships within the engagement model created in the literature review section. Structural equation modelling is a suitable statistical tool to apply, because SEM tests relationships concurrently. Moreover, SEM has become a widely used approach in different disciplines, especially in marketing, as it tests the framework of engagement relationships in consumer behaviour (Hair et al., 1992, 2016). Similarly, in their recent study, O’Brien & Toms (2010) applied SEM to test the relationships of their proposed model of engagement. Given that this approach has been used in similar studies that tested engagement (i.e., O’Brien & Toms (2010)), it is an appropriate approach to employ for this study because this study is focused on testing the relationships proposed in its online consumer engagement framework.

This study uses SEM for these three main reasons. The use of SEM in this study helps to show the interrelationships among the dependent variables in the case of the concept of engagement, which is the combination of affective, behavioural, and cognitive characteristics. The term engagement is an abstract concept, which cannot be measured directly. However, the interrelationships between dependent variables, such as the three components of engagement, help to measure the latent construct and these apply to other unobserved variables, such as participation, loyalty, and word-of-mouth in this study. Finally, this research uses an existing model to test engagement and its relationships, and SEM is the perfect means of justifying the engagement model generated in the literature section. SEM integrates latent variables into the analysis, which helps to create a link

between the measured and latent variables. In addition, SEM can help to improve statistical measurement, better present the theoretical framework, and diagnose measurement errors.

In addition, SEM has become a very popular technique because of the fact that there are several software packages available, such as AMOS, LISREL, and EQS. This has made SEM an easily accessible analytical method. To employ the structural equation modelling approach to test the constructs within the proposed model, the researcher used AMOS 25, one of the most popular software packages used to test structural models (Hair et al., 1992, 2016). AMOS allows researchers to “empirically test theories” (Scientific Software International, 2011). AMOS 25 was used to fit the data to the model after the researcher had collected data for the observed variables. AMOS was adopted in this study because the author had access to this program through Abertay University.

SEM is unique in the sense that it provides value to model fit, validity, and reliability following a rigorous model test. For example, RMSEA in the structural model justifies the goodness of fit: if the value is 0 it is considered perfect fit and it is still considered to be acceptable if the value is around 0.08. The ideal value for the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) and the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) is 1, whereas close to 1 is considered acceptable and close to fit. Similarly, SEM allows for the testing of construct reliability, which is done by analysing composite reliability and average variance extracted. The coefficients are analysed to test the statistical significance and correct sign. Likewise, squared multiple correlation coefficient (SMCC) provides the level of variance of the construct justified by the measures, whereas all the values are estimated to the nearest of a whole percentage.

After the Amos analysis was complete, the researcher applied the data to the proposed model to examine the relationships in the online consumer engagement model. This final step in data analysis tested the hypotheses posited in the current study.

3.3.1 Qualitative Research Method

Unlike the quantitative method, qualitative research employs research with a subjective ontology and epistemological direction of phenomenology for the investigatory process. Unlike testing a theory or hypothesis using the quantitative approach, qualitative research applies an inductive

research approach to develop a theory rather than applying an existing one. Qualitative researchers believe in the physical science model of the quantitative approach and debate the differences between the natural and social environment from a subjective perspective (Smith & Heshusius, 1986). They also associate their approach of identifying reality in relation to the individual's way of approaching the social world (Bryman, 2004). Hence, in this perspective, there is a close relationship between the knower and the known and the cause and effects in the social world. Therefore, the qualitative research method is effective and rich in reflecting social realities and human issues within the social world, which is something that quantitative research (i.e., scientific methods and physical sciences) fails to address (Onwuegbuzie, 2002; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Moreover, qualitative research uses a small sample size but very rich and quality driven subjective data (Collis & Hussey, 2003). There has been a discussion about the different sciences borrowing each other's methodologies and questions have been asked as to whether physical science can research the social world and human behaviour (Smith, 1983). This debate is ongoing between quantitative and qualitative researchers in social science research, and dates back to the late 19th century (Onwuegbuzie, 2002; Smith, 1983; Smith & Heshusius, 1986).

As they have different functionalities and different philosophical dimensions, quantitative and qualitative methodologies have many differences between them and have been in conflict for a long time. Although they are incompatible with each other, as described in the previous section, researchers look at the possibilities of drawing common associations between objective and subjective ontologies and positive and phenomenological epistemologies. This suggests that there are options for combining these methodologies, rather than making a strict choice between one or the other.

Having realized the importance of combining these methods, researchers came up with some suggestions. Campbell & Fiske (1959) emphasized "multiple operationalize" in favour of "single operationalize", which was a very effective form of social psychology back then. They argued that "to estimate the relative contributions of trait and method variance, more than one trait as well as more than one method must be employed in the validation process" (Campbell & Fiske, 1959). Their experiment, in which they used a multiple operationalize approach, opened a flood gate for other scientists to follow suit. Social scientists also started to use qualitative and quantitative methods in their research investigations; later, it was termed as "methodological triangulation".

In recent times, research scientists have emphasized the use of both methods (i.e., qualitative and quantitative) to investigate their research objective. As a result, research scientists adopt combined methods for understanding complex human behaviour in social sciences resources. Johnson et al., (2006) explain the four research approaches that are used most frequently in the management research area. The first of the four types are positivism, which has long been adopted in business management research as a quantitative method for collecting and testing hypothesis. The second is neo-empiricism (i.e., qualitative positivism) that prioritizes the application of non-quantitative methods from positivistic presumptions to explain and inductively demonstrate human activities or actions in and around an organization. The third type of approach is a social constructionist position regarding philosophical presumptions, which emphasizes the use of qualitative methods to analyse structural phenomenology or critical ethnography. The fourth and final approach is known as affirmative postmodernism and is like critical theory in its connection to the ontological level; however, it emphasizes the use of qualitative methods to analyse deconstruction.

From the discussion above of the research approaches adopted in the field of management, it looks logical and plausible to integrate quantitative and qualitative research methods to research on the different dimensions of actors' (i.e., human) behaviour by adopting the second approach, known as neo-empiricism. Given the fact that the reality regarding human behaviour in the online environment is very complex and that the argument of strictly following one approach only has eased among academics, interest in integrating these two extremes has attracted much attention (Cassell & Lee, 2011).

In the current study, as previously mentioned, the researcher has chosen to remain in between the two approaches known as subjective and objective ontology. As a result, it is highly likely that his choice of methodology and philosophical position will reach past positivism to neo-empiricism (i.e., qualitative positivism), which is the combination of both subjective and objective ontology. The researcher is confident, as a positivist, about the existence of an objective social world, which needs more exploration in relation to the different components that constitute the causal relationships between these components and the focus of his investigation. For this very reason, the researcher can apply quantitative methods to explain such relationships between elements in the outer world. The researcher also identifies the social world from a neo-empiricist perspective, as the social actors, or human beings, under investigation apply their subjective interpretations and meanings to their understanding in the day-to-day world and the researcher can investigate these

activities, interactions, and interpretations from a third-person point of view (Schwandt, 1996). Hence, by using qualitative methods, such as by interviewing the social actors, the researcher can explore their subjective experiences and interpretations of the social world, which will be discussed in the next section.

3.3.2 Qualitative data collection

This study uses in-depth interviews as the main technique by which to acquire qualitative data. The advantage of using qualitative data in the form of interviews is that it offers suitable ground on which to explore and understand meaning in detail (Arksey & Knight, 1999). Therefore, the interview method is appropriate for this study because the researcher can get abundant and quality information about Apple brand champions in Facebook's online brand community. As far as the questions used in the interview are concerned, the researcher can choose between unstructured and semi-structured questions (Bryman, 2004, 2015). This study chooses semi-structured questions, because the researcher aims to consider multiple cases rather than a single case and, therefore, semi-structured interviews fit well as they help to establish "cross-case comparability" (Bryman, 2004, 2015) more accurately than unstructured interviews.

The interview procedures and instruments are well discussed in the extant literature. This study follows the guidelines established by previous researchers (e.g., Bryman, 2004, 2015; Rubin & Rubin, 2005, 2011) to develop the interview instrument and to target potential interviewees, design interview guides, gain access to interviewees, and conduct interviews. The following subsections discuss these categories in brief.

This study uses purposive homogenous sampling of the Apple brand champions in the Facebook user generated brand community who have similar traits and characteristics in terms of their experience and behaviour with user generated brand communities on Facebook. The purposive (also called judgement) sampling technique is useful when the researcher consciously selects participants because of the specific qualities (e.g., knowledge and expertise) that the participants' exhibit. The selection of participants was carried out across the UK in order to ensure the similarity of participants and so that an in-depth understanding could be gained of their behaviour in user generated online brand communities. As a non-random technique, this does not require any theories or categories of participants (Bernard, 2002): the researcher decides who he/she needs,

based on their knowledge of the participants and the phenomenon of interest. Such an approach can provide rich information for the researcher.

The six brand champions from the user generated Apple brand community in Facebook were interviewed. The criteria for interviewing Apple brand champions were set by their involvement with the user generated brand community and the length of their membership of the brand community. Participants' were defined by the engagement definitions (i.e., affective, cognitive, and behavioural involvement) that they demonstrated in their user generated brand community activities and they had to have been a member for at least 2 years.

Table 6: Qualitative sources of data collection

	Data Source	Collection Method	Qualitative
Interview 1	Apple brand champions & active Facebook users	Semi-structured interview	☑
Interview 2	Apple brand champions & active Facebook users	Semi-structured interview	☑
Interview 3	Apple brand champions & active Facebook users	Semi-structured interview	☑
Interview 4	Apple brand champions & active Facebook users	Semi-structured interview	☑
Interview 5	Apple brand champions & active Facebook users	Semi-structured interview	☑
Interview 6	Apple brand champions & active Facebook users	Semi-structured interview	☑

Source: Author's representation

Potential interviewees for the study

One of the most difficult challenges when conducting qualitative interviews is interviewing the right person, as the intended research questions can only be answered by a targeted interviewee who can share valuable and reliable information that is relevant to the research. In this regard,

Rubin & Rubin (2005) explain that, “interviewees should be experienced and knowledgeable in the area you are interviewing about.”

It is important to consider whether the experience and knowledge of the interviewee in the research area can provide the information sought by the researcher (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). In this study, advocates from within the Apple brand community in the UK were targeted in order that their online behaviour changes, along with their interaction and involvement with other community members, could be studied.

Firstly, many previous studies have adopted interview-based case studies to investigate consumers behaviour in online brand communities (Dessart et al., 2015). However, the interview focus was on engagement with the brand and not the interactions among brand community members (Wirtz et al., 2013; Rehman et al., 2016). Since the objective of this study is to explore the dimensions of engagement and the relationship between four constructs; namely, participation, engagement, loyalty, and word-of-mouth, this research is important for both academic and managerial perspectives. Additionally, interviewing individuals from a variety of perspectives has the potential to enhance the credibility of the findings (Parry, 1998; Rubin & Rubin, 2005, 2011).

Secondly, Rubin & Rubin (2005) also discuss the fact that it is equally difficult to decide before an interview how the interviewee is going to provide data and, hence, “the best you can do is choose a person who is in the appropriate position” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Apple brand champions are those who have broad knowledge about the product, are actively engaged with other online brand community members, and who have undergone the transformation from participation to engagement and to loyalty and WoM behaviour. Thus, it is expected that they may have a better ability to understand the research problem than other members of the brand community.

The interviews were conducted in the UK because of the time and financial constraints of travelling. As a result, the targeted interviewees with Apple brand champions in the online brand community on Facebook were based only in the UK. As mentioned in Chapter 3 (quantitative data collection), the quantitative data was collected from the UK. Thus, the qualitative and quantitative methods match the problem that the researcher wants to address.

3.4.1 Mixed method research as a methodology

Johnson et al., (2007, p.123) define mixed methods as “the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g., use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration.”

Mixed methods approach is the preferred methodology because it is believed to be one of the most intellectual and practical approaches that addresses the limitations of using a single method approach (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Moreover, it is argued that this approach brings about most useful results in relation to research demand by being the most informative, well-balanced, and holistic in nature (Johnson et al., 2007).

Although the mixed method research approach was identified a long time ago and has been argued about since then (Campbell & Fiske, 1959), it started to be applied in social science research in the late 1990s. One of the reasons for this is the debate among scientists about positivism and phenomenology. Scientists from the objectivist school of thought, especially those who are purist objectivists, reject the marriage of positive and phenomenological epistemologies. By expressing their objections about the mixture of these two philosophical assumptions and using quantitative and qualitative approaches, these scientists argue that this mixture is an incompatible approach (e.g., Smith, 1983; Smith & Heshusius, 1986).

As a result, the challenge for the social science researcher who adopts a mixed method approach is obvious: they must present a counter argument for their choice of this marriage between two different paradigms of thought. In addition, those who endorsed this new approach—which is a methodological transformation—and solicited for this methodological triangulation remain far short of providing justification about their adoption of it (Jick, 1979).

3.4.2 Pragmatisms

As a result, some research scientists such as Howe (1988) have put forward a pragmatic philosophical notion in the paradigm dispute regarding the choice of methodology. Pragmatists, on the other hand, do not support the unnatural combination of positivism and epistemological phenomenologies regarding choice, method, and the logic behind the research (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). However, they stand in the middle of these two philosophical assumptions

regarding ontology. They suggest that the pragmatic stance of identifying research investigations is not based on hard and fast rules or a formalistic approach, and further suggest that the researcher could choose either a subjective or objective epistemological direction in the process of investigating the research question at hand (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998).

When following this research perspective, other social scientists also emphasized the use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches depending on what the researcher wants to investigate and the desire to understand the social world more efficiently (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998; Onwuegbuzie, 2002). The literature on pragmatism has been discussed by social scientists (e.g., Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998; Onwuegbuzie, 2002; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Morgan, 2007) as being one of the important philosophical presumptions that integrates both quantitative and qualitative methods. Defining pragmatics, Morgan (2007) emphasizes, “The great strength of this pragmatic approach to social science research methodology is its emphasis on the connection between epistemological concerns about the nature of the knowledge that we produce and technical concerns about the methods that we use to generate that knowledge.”

Along with the use of pragmatism in the mixed research approach (Feilzer, 2010), other philosophical assumptions are also available in the literature (Creswell & Clark, 2007). Some researchers have put forward the dialectical perspective (Greene & Caracelli, 1997, 2003) and they argue that there is no perfect one fit paradigm research approach that can be used for mixed research; therefore, they advocate the use of the multiple approaches (Greene & Caracelli, 1997, 2003). Likewise, Creswell et al., (2003) have claimed that mixed method research can use different philosophical assumptions according to the research design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). For Mertens (2008), the transformative-emancipatory perspective is applicable for mixed research methods.

Although there are long-standing arguments in relation to which approach best fits mixed research in the social sciences, scientists have applied this method in various areas of social science, such as sociology, education, evaluation, and health science (Creswell, 2009; Molina-Azorin, 2011; Bryman, 2015). Today, the mixed method has been developed as a third paradigm in many research areas, especially in social science, because of its unique features that can accommodate two approaches together and provide an understanding of the most complex human behaviours in the social world (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Morse, 2016).

The mixed research method approach has become a frequently used approach since the beginning of this century in social science disciplines, and especially in management and accounting research. These always favoured the positivist approach in the past (e.g., Cassell & Lee, 2011; Cassell et al., 2006; Currall & Towler, 2003; Grafton et al., 2011; Jogulu & Pansiri, 2011; Lillis & Mundy, 2005; Modell, 2005, 2009, 2010; Morse, 2016).

When researchers started to question the prominence and frequent use of positivism, they began investigating their research questions from a middle-range thought process and from in-between philosophical presumptions regarding reality in terms of ontology, epistemology, and methodological dimensions (Laughlin, 1995). Referring to the research approach for accounting, Laughlin (1995) believes that any one type of research perspective may not reach to the truth of the research. It only explores the surface reality, which is also called the “deception of reality”, and, hence, mixed research approaches in accounting are required in order that reality can be understood in many possible ways (Laughlin, 1995, 2004, 2007; Modell, 2009, 2010). In this regard, the multiple research approach can “bridge the divide between the economics-based, functionalist ‘mainstream’ and the ‘alternative’ paradigm informed by interpretive and critical perspectives” (Modell, 2010) in management research. Moreover, Cassell et al., (2006), in association with the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), ran a project related to the use of qualitative methods in business management. After interviewing a variety of respondents, including academics, students, doctors and even qualitative researchers, Cassell et al., (2006) concluded that interviewee refereed mixed methods was one of the best research approaches.

Influenced by the way mixed research methods have been conducted so far and its capacity in the field of social science, and in business management, the researcher takes an in-between stance regarding his philosophical suppositions and the methodological choice made in this study.

3.5.1 Mixed methods research in this study

The choice of methodology depends on the philosophical choice that a researcher makes in any piece of research work. The important thing to ensure is that the nature and content of the research justifies the methodological choice made and resources that can be used (Gill & Johnson, 2002).

This research study uses mixed methods as this method fits with the researchers’ philosophical assumptions. This method is also well-suited to addressing the knowledge gap in engagement

literature, as discussed in the literature review section, in which various engagement components were discussed, along with the problem of interrelationships between constructs such as loyalty, word-of-mouth, participation, and engagement in user generated brand communities.

However, research carried out in the extant literature needs empirical evidence to justify the engagement concept in relation to user generated brand communities and other business-related outcomes. Researchers have presented many models and have used quantitative findings in most cases, but such models are not fully acknowledged because of under-developed research into engagement and because these models do not fully justify the relationships between engagement and loyalty and word-of-mouth with participation. Therefore, to build up an appropriate model by which to investigate the dimensions of engagement and the relationship between participation, engagement, loyalty, and word-of-mouth, the researcher conducted an exploratory case study among Apple fans in the online brand community environment.

This study, along with the case study, uses a quantitative study using a questionnaire distributed among Facebook users to investigate the dimensions of engagement and the relationship between participation, engagement, loyalty, and word-of-mouth. It was not appropriate to use only a quantitative study in this research, as a quantitative approach might have taken a long time and there might have been issues with the availability of data.

The researcher believes that adopting only a quantitative study in this research would be inadequate for exploring the complex research phenomena. These constructs; namely, participation, engagement, loyalty, and word-of-mouth, have causal relationships between them, but previous research, as discussed in the literature review, has not provided evidence—either through quantitative or qualitative study—of there being direct and indirect relationships between these concepts. Hence, this study brings together evidence from both methods and provides a strong basis for understanding the dimensions and relationships among the constructs. Together, the quantitative and qualitative study help to make the model more convincing, which would not have been the case if a single method had been adopted to test the research model of the relationship between the constructs. Therefore, the researcher is fully confident and convinced that the use of a mixed method (i.e., quantitative and qualitative) methodology, which is frequently used in other research in the management and accounting disciplines, is the best way to investigate consumers' engagement behaviours and the outcome of these in this thesis. In addition, a mixed method fits

better than a single research method, according to the objectives set for this study, when it comes to justifying the main research question.

The core objectives of this study are to investigate and understand the dimensions of engagement and the role of consumer's engagement in influencing loyalty and word-of-mouth. Objectivists look at knowledge, as a form of reality, from objective and observable perspectives in cases where it can be measured. However, the question remains as to whether knowledge can be measured on the merit of physical attributes. This is because knowledge is an abstract idea that represents complex human behaviours, cultures, attitudes, etc., which are more than mere physical characteristics. As a result, positivism does not serve the main aim of the study, as it considers social phenomena as being part of the outer natural world. In comparison with this stance, a subjective perspective helps researchers to understand complex social phenomena but does not provide evidence of the direct impact of engagement's relationship with loyalty and word-of-mouth in measurable quantities. The impact of customer engagement on loyalty and word-of-mouth, in terms of purchase as well as intention to purchase, is indeed an important purpose of this study; therefore, it is best to stand in the middle of the objectivist-subjectivist stances in order to investigate these relationships.

Engagement refers to context dependent and dynamic processes, rather than an object (Brodie et al., 2013). The position adopted by the researcher for this study as a "middle roader" beautifully serves the research interests of this study as it takes knowledge of both quantitative and qualitative research and forms it into a workable solution that has the potential to be an expansive and creative form of research (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

The main research question for this study is: How does consumer engagement enhance loyalty and word-of-mouth in user generated brand communities? The extant literature in the field of relationship marketing provides significant evidence that there is a positive relationship between these constructs. Since the literature provides sufficient evidence of there being a positive relationship between the constructs, the researcher believes that he can adopt a quantitative approach to answer the main research question by testing these relationships. The extant literature makes clear the fact that there is a need for further empirical evidence of the engagement dimensions and their relationship with other constructs because the engagement concept is still under researched. Therefore, a qualitative research approach—in the form of an interview case

study—is an appropriate choice by which to gain insights into the dimensions of engagement and their relationships with other constructs.

Hence, the discussion of the research questions and objectives for this study carried out above justifies the choice of a mixed research method for this study. Since social phenomena can be both quantitative and qualitative (Ercikan & Roth, 2006), the current research argues that knowledge about engagement and its relationship with other constructs needs to be investigated by using both methods together.

Quantitative and qualitative methods can be used to provide reliability and a rich description of the knowledge gained about the research subject under investigation. In support of a similar idea, Jogulu and Pansiri (2011, p. 688) argue that “divergent findings created through differing data collection and analysis techniques appear to lead to greater depth and breadth in overall results, from which researchers can make more accurate inference with increased credibility.”

Finally, structural equation modelling, as a statistical technique, is applied to test the hypothesis of the relationships among different relationship constructs, such as engagement, loyalty, participation, and word-of-mouth. In the meantime, a qualitative approach; namely, an interview-based case study, is applied to explore how engagement, participation, loyalty, and word-of-mouth relate to each other in the broader user generated online brand community.

The following section will discuss how all the sub research questions will be answered after the quantitative and qualitative studies have been carried out.

3.5.2 Analysing sub-research questions and methods

The extant literature by Bryman (2007), Creswell and Plano Clark (2007), Tashakkori and Creswell (2007), and Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) on the mixed research method discusses its significance in detail. The literature accepts the fact that it is not as easy to analyse research questions by using a mixed research approach as compared to a single method study. One of the reasons for these difficulties is that a mixed research method may give rise to problems if the research questions are dealt with separately by using quantitative and qualitative methods instead of integrating the research questions (Bryman, 2015).

There are many ways suggested as to how research questions can be analysed using mixed methods. Tashakkori and Creswell (2007) suggest three ways of presenting research questions for

mixed methods research questions. The first type isolates quantitative and qualitative questions and then creates mixed research questions; the second type includes a mixed research question first and then separates the mixed questions into quantitative and qualitative sub questions; and the third type suggests developing research questions in every stage of study as the study develops.

Tashakkori and Creswell (2007) believe that parallel or concurrent research studies mostly adopt the second type, in which a main research question is later separated into sub questions. Moreover, the third type is generally used in sequential studies. This study, being concurrent study, follows the second type. Hence, the following process is followed to form the research questions. At first, a central research question is developed, which is then classified into separate specific research questions that include quantitative and qualitative sub-questions answered at each stage of the study. There are seven sub research questions for this study, which are analysed using the empirical results from the results of both the qualitative study (SRQ1-4) and quantitative study (SRQ5-7).

The following are the seven sub research questions for this study:

- SRQ1. What are the dimensions of consumer engagement?
- SRQ2. How does participation enhance engagement?
- SRQ3. How does engagement influence loyalty?
- SRQ4. How does engagement influence word-of-mouth?
- SRQ5. How does participation influence loyalty?
- SRQ6. How does participation influence word-of-mouth?
- SRQ7. How are loyalty and word-of-mouth related to each other?

On the one hand, the quantitative study focuses on consumers' online behaviours related to participation and engagement and how these contribute to the relationship outcomes, such as loyalty and word-of-mouth. The quantitative data is collected through an online survey questionnaire, as discussed in the previous sections. In addition, the quantitative aspect of this study goes beyond hypothesis testing by helping to identify the problems associated with measuring engagement and identifying limitations. The qualitative study tries to fill this gap by using the findings of the interviews, as gathered in the qualitative study.

The qualitative study of this research, as carried out through semi-structured interviews with Apple brand champions, is an appropriate choice of approach. Strauss and Corbin (1998) explain that qualitative research is appropriate as it allows rich insights to be gained into subjects about which either little or much is known.

3.6.1 Mixed research approach as a research design

Many researchers have defined research design from different points of view; however, the most widely used definition comes from Creswell and Plano Clark (2007), who define it as the “procedures for collecting, analysing, interpreting, and reporting data in research studies.” Ever since the mixed research method gained wider recognition and started to be used in different research disciplines, much attention was given to its classification (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Many researchers defined it from different perspectives and classifications. However, one of the most used categories of classification comes from Creswell and Plano Clark (2007), who divide mixed research method design into four main categories known as triangulation design, embedded design, explanatory design, and exploratory design.

Although there are various types of mixed research method classifications, there are more similarities between most of the classifications than differences. Most of the definitions and categories refer to the overall process and requirements for mixed research design. There are certain aspects, also known as the decision-making process of the mixed research method, that should be considered in order to meet the criteria for mixed research design appropriately. After analysing the literature on the mixed research method, Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) suggested three major issues that should be considered for any type of design, be it triangulation design, embedded design, explanatory design, or exploratory design. These are: 1) the sequence (i.e., timing) in which the data is collected and analysed, 2) the preference of the study (i.e., regarding quantitative and qualitative study), and 3) the stage at which the data collection process and findings are integrated (Morgan, 1998; Ivankova et al., 2006; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

3.6.2 Parallel data collection and analysis

Sequencing refers to the timing of when the relationship between quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis takes place (Greene et al., 1989; Morgan, 1998; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). There can be situations in which quantitative and qualitative studies are carried out either in sequence (i.e., one after the other) or concurrently (i.e., in parallel) (Ivankova et al., 2006). Concurrent (i.e., parallel) studies are a situation in which quantitative and qualitative data are

collected, analysed, and interpreted at (or approximately at) the same time, whereas sequential studies collect quantitative and qualitative data and analyse it at different stages, which means that the researchers apply data of different types one type after another (Ivankova et al., 2006; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Generally, if a study has the purpose of using triangulation or integrated findings, concurrent design fits well, whereas if the study has the purpose of conducting an exploratory study using a combination of quantitative and qualitative data, sequential design fits well (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

This study uses concurrent mixed design for both theoretical and practical reasons. As the main research question of this study requires the use of numerical and narrative data to examine the same phenomena, it is argued that triangulation complements the concurrent research design. Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) also suggest that concurrent design would suit this research, as the research aims to examine findings from numerical and narrative data. It is therefore practical to analyse data that is collected from two sources at the same time.

The qualitative study, on the other hand, will involve interviews being conducted with Apple band champions from the Apple user generated brand community on Facebook. It is difficult to arrange interviews with them, especially given the fact that the interviewees' personal identity in the virtual world is little known and that it takes time to establish a connection with them. In addition, the process of arranging an interview normally takes quite a long time, as the researcher must wait passively for the interviewees' responses. If the quantitative and qualitative studies are conducted one after another, it will be difficult to finish the overall project in the limited time available for the completion of a PhD thesis. Therefore, concurrent design is more feasible for this study.

3.7.1 Quantitative method as a preferred method of data collection

Preference refers to the importance of one data collection method over the others while answering the research question (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Researchers need to be conscious of their choice of methods and answer the research question accordingly. There are two possible preferences in concurrent design: to give equal importance to both methods, to answer the research question, or to prioritize one over the other.

In this thesis, priority is given to the quantitative approach. This decision is influenced by the research purpose and quantitative sample size ($n=551$) of the current study. The purpose of this research is to explore the role of customer engagement in influencing loyalty and word-of-mouth.

3.8.1 Quantitative and qualitative data integration in this study

The decision to mix both the findings is another important process in mixed methods design, which justifies how the quantitative and qualitative approaches complement each other. The proper mixing of the data makes the mixed methods design strong and reliable; otherwise, it can involve the selection of two methods, even though the quantitative and qualitative data are presented together (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). In recent times, mixed methods research has become very popular, especially in the social science discipline. However, it suffers from the problem that the quantitative and qualitative dimensions of a study are used in isolation and they therefore are not integrated with each other (Bryman, 2015). Last century saw a great problem regarding integration: Greene et al., (1989) found that 44% of the 57 articles they reviewed did not integrate the quantitative and qualitative data, whereas research carried out at the beginning of this century by Bryman (2006), that examined 232 mixed methods research articles dating from 1994 to 2003 using content analysis, also found a lack of integration.

It is a general trend that the researchers of concurrent studies collect and analyse both the data sets separately at first and later integrate them (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). This study has followed a separate data analysis process for both the quantitative and qualitative study.

The results are also presented separately, but they are connected and compared together. Mertens (2011) describes data integration as “explain[ing] clearly how the results were integrated and the contribution to improve understanding that was achieved based on that integration.” This research presents the quantitative and qualitative results separately and later combines them to relate them to the research question. The empirical results of this integration (i.e., the quantitative and qualitative studies combined) support each other, as the variables used as measurement items in the quantitative study are also talked about and discussed during the interviews carried out with the Apple user generated brand community champions. As a result, the integration of the two data sets provides reliable triangulation of the data findings and therefore adds to the validity of the research.

3.9.1 Reliability in quantitative and qualitative research

Reliability refers to how a study can be reproduced in a similar means as it was originally carried out by using the same research and same methods, but on different occasions (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; Johnson et al., 2006). The basis of reliability in quantitative results are their measurement consistency (Jordan & Hofer, 2001), which is tested using statistical instruments (Jordan & Hofer, 2001; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). In a qualitative study, reliability depends on its philosophical presumptions about the outside world, which is viewed as being both permanent and reachable without bias (Johnson et al., 2006).

The qualitative school of thought considers human beings as being an inseparable part of the social world while, at the same time believing that human behaviour is constantly changing. As a result, it is not easy to maintain the reliability of qualitative studies in such an ever-changing environment. Therefore, achieving reliability through qualitative studies largely depends on capturing consistency, rather than achieving same findings repeatedly (Collingridge & Gantt, 2008). The most obvious thing that a researcher must do to achieve the quality of data is to use low-inference descriptors (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; Seale, 1999), which involves capturing observations as concretely as possible (Seale, 1999). The researcher, having considered the very fact and importance of low inference descriptors, recorded, and transcribed all six interviews with the permission of the participants in order to maintain the reliability of the analysis. Moreover, he double-checked the recorded transcripts by sending them to the participants so that they could confirm the reliability of the data and provide feedback.

In addition, the researcher maintained a neutral position during the data collection in order to avoid personal bias and errors, and to ensure that he provided accurate descriptions of what the interviewees' experienced, thought, and felt (Arksey & Knight, 1999). He asked several questions, such as main questions, emergent questions, and other follow up questions, in order to achieve consistency in answer patterns among the interviews. McKinnon (1988) discusses the fact that emergent questioning helps to lessen the danger of reliability and validity, as such questions allow the researcher the space to overcome the problems of the human mind. At the same time, the researcher was conscious of the main questions and the chances of personal bias being involved. In addition, it is generally said that qualitative data analysis is subjective, broad, and inconsistent.

However, it can be improved using the consistent coding process (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; Seale, 1999), which the researcher followed in order to code the data to thereby increase the reliability of the qualitative study. As Seale (1999) rightly explains, coding is an important procedure by which to represent the researcher's thoughts about the meaning of the data in interview-based case studies.

3.10.1 Validity in quantitative and qualitative research

Validity works as a checking mechanism for the quality and accuracy of data and its findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). Validity in research can be demonstrated in two ways; namely, as external and internal validity. External validity refers to the level of generalizability of the research findings to the population, context and time (Birnberg et al., 1990; Dellinger & Leech, 2008; Modell, 2005). Internal validity refers to the level of a researcher's confidence in the conclusions drawn from the variables or items in the study (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998).

External Validity

Definitions of external validity refer to the generalizability of the research findings to the population. It is obvious that generalizability is more likely in a quantitative study that uses a large sample size; however, qualitative studies normally use a small sample size and hence may fall short of validity (Johnson et al., 2006). There are two types of interpretations in social science research, which are known as statistical (i.e., scientific) and logical (i.e., causal) interpretations (Mitchell, 1983). Mitchell further explains that, in quantitative studies, which are analytical in nature, both interpretation can exist, whereas in the interpretations collected from a qualitative study (i.e., case study), only logical interpretations exist (Mitchell, 1983).

According to Bryman (2004), "the findings of qualitative research are to generalize to theory rather than to population". In this study, the qualitative design helps to increase generalizability and supports the theory through the inductive mode using the data gathered from the interviews.

There are several ways that the study has achieved external validity. First, the use of purposive sampling helped the researcher in this study to choose interview subjects that the researcher was interested in and that were demanded by the study (Silverman, 2001). Second, Parry (1998) states that collecting several ideas related to the same construct or event can help to minimize the

negative impact of a single source. Therefore, the interviews carried out separately with the Apple brand champions helped to achieve validity. Third, in the quantitative study, data quality and size influence the validity of the study. The researcher is aware of this fact and therefore has collected the largest possible data sample in order to increase the sample size and to ensure the quality of the data. Fourth, this research combines both quantitative and qualitative studies and tries to attain triangulation as evidence of external validity. This is because Bryman (1988) suggests that the mixture of quantitative and qualitative approaches can enhance the generalizability of the researchers' findings if "they can be shown to provide mutual confirmation."

Internal validity

Internal validity refers to the relationships among variables (Modell, 2005; Yin, 2003). The researcher has confidence in the relationships, inferences, and patterns he identified in the study and believes that these are trustworthy (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). In quantitative studies, internal validity is achieved when any changes in the dependent variables can be referred to an independent variable rather than other causal factors (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998).

Similarly, if a study tests a hypothesis, statistical techniques help to achieve internal validity by controlling extraneous variables (Johnson et al., 2006). This research presumed that dependent and independent variables were in a relationship based on the theoretical foundation extracted from the extant literature and empirical findings. In addition, other control variables, which might have affected the models and the conclusions, are also included. Similarly, other statistical techniques were used, including structural equation modelling, which are very important for the validity of the presumed result.

On the other hand, qualitative research considers validity in terms of to what level the observations and measurements represent social reality (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). The qualitative study in this research analyses and interprets these using methods suggested in previous studies (e.g., Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). The researcher has addressed any unexpected answers that were given during the interview and explained them as far as possible. In addition, the qualitative data interpretation went through a theoretical coding process (e.g., data familiarization to report writing).

Construct validity

In addition to external and internal validity, this research also considers construct validity. Yin (2003) explains it as being the operational measures for quantitative and qualitative study. The

researcher should ask as himself/herself whether he/she is being honest about what he/she is measuring/recording (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Construct validity is problematic in qualitative research because the researchers' subjective and personal bias may prove to be the greatest hindrance to validity. To make sure that construct validity is valid for the result of the data, the researcher in this study followed a theoretical pattern and coded the data accordingly.

3.10.2 Limitations of mixed research methods

One of the most common problems associated with mixed research methods is data integration. This is because of the differences between the quantitative and qualitative data collection process, design, findings, and analysis, which may cause some friction when the findings are combined.

Mixed research is criticized for not having a strong philosophical tradition, as the results of the integration of two studies may prove short lived (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). However, the researcher of this study does not believe it to be a limitation; rather, it is the result of under-explained methodological choices and philosophical assumptions.

Similarly, although mixed research methods have become popular in social science research, some practical and paradigm problems may arise when combining and evaluating the findings when the findings of the quantitative and qualitative studies do not match (Creswell, 2011).

As far as paradigms are concerned, there are some pluralistic assumptions associated with mixing two philosophical assumptions, such as positivism and neo-empiricism (Johnson et al., 2006), in cases where these two assumptions come together. Mixed research methods take more time and effort and are expensive to carry out. They also require deep knowledge and a rich understanding of the methodological assumptions and research area as well.

3.11.1 Summary

The research methodology chapter has focused on the choice of research design. Here, philosophical assumptions have been considered in relation to the main purpose of this study in terms of the choice of research design, and the methods used have been explained in detail. The use of mixed method research and the researcher's middle range position between the ontological

and epistemological points of view has also been discussed. Moreover, this chapter has focused on the suitability of combining both quantitative and qualitative methods, after considering the nature of research questions in this study, to achieve triangulation and to increase the validity of this research.

In addition, the researcher has focused on the concurrent quantitative rich mixed method, whose use is based on the research purpose and research objectives. The next chapter will discuss the quantitative data collection, findings, and analysis.

Chapter 4

Quantitative Data Collection, Findings, and Analysis

4.1 Quantitative data collection procedures

4.1.1 Choice of sampling

The study employed a sample of participants who were aged 18 or older, UK residents, and who follow brand communities on Facebook. The participants had to be at least 18 years old because, at 18, they are adults who can oversee their own engagement choices in brand communities on Facebook. As this study was concerned with engagement in online brand communities on Facebook, participants had to provide evidence of their mental, physical, behavioural, and social involvement in such communities. Furthermore, a sample was collected in the UK as statistics depict Facebook as being the leading social media platform in the United Kingdom as ranked by market share, which stands at almost 75% (Statista, 2017). In fact, according to marketers, the UK has over 33.9 million Facebook users, which is more than 50% of the UK population (Eemarketers, 2017). Additionally, as Facebook was the environment in which online consumer engagement was to be explored in this study, it was appropriate to collect data from Facebook users who follow brand communities on Facebook.

This research used the snowball sampling technique to collect survey responses. Wimmer and Dominick (2003) prefer the snowball technique, which depends on referrals made by the research subjects (i.e., participants). The reasoning behind the use of the snowball technique is that it aims to collect participants who are knowledgeable and interested in the research who then suggest other potential participants for the research (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). The collection of the sample happens because of the referrals “made among people who share or know of others who possess some characteristics that are of research interest” (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981, p. 141). In the context of this research, participants in various groups within online brand communities on Facebook and others come together to share their experiences and knowledge.

It is widely accepted that the snowball technique is used frequently in quantitative surveys and it is further stated that a snowball sample can “obtain evidence about individuals whose experiences are relevant to the study’s purpose” (Henry, 2009). In addition, in their recent research on the snowball technique, Baltar et al., (2012) find that the snowball technique fits perfectly with studies

that investigate social networks (e.g., Facebook). The research carried out by Mazman and Usluel (2010) on the use of Facebook in education also found that the use of the snowball technique was positive in the case of online surveys. Their survey on Facebook researched more than 600 hundred completed responses. Mazman and Usluel posted a survey on the Facebook, shared the link with their friends and requested that the participants of the study forward the survey link to other potential participants. Similarly, Hyllegard et al., (2012) adopted the snowball technique to investigate how women from different groups and generations differ in terms of their company linking on Facebook. Their research used more than 400 subjects for their online survey. Hyllegard et al., posted the survey link on their personal profiles and requested that participants forward the link to other Facebook users and through email accounts, which proved to be a useful technique in social networks.

Furthermore, given that snowball sampling is a suitable approach to use when studying social networks, it was an appropriate approach to use in the current study as Facebook is an online social network. Similarly, Baltar et al., (2012) also found that the snow ball technique, when used in virtual environments (e.g., Facebook), has higher response rates than traditional methods because the researcher's personal information, as shared on Facebook, gives the participants confidence.

Lastly, as suggested by Henry (2009), snowball sampling can help researchers to gain insights about individuals that are relevant for a study. Therefore, the use of snowball sampling in this study helped the researcher to gain insights into consumers' brand community engagement experiences on Facebook.

Snowball sampling

The snowball sampling method, when used as a chain of referral, helps the researcher to reach a population that other sampling methods may find difficult to reach. Similarly, the snowball method can be carried out at a low cost, is simple, needs little planning, uses less labour and requires a smaller workforce. However, the snowball sampling technique provides the researcher with little control over the sampling method because the researcher must depend on the previous participants in their study. It is also difficult for the researcher to know the true distribution of the population sample. Finally, there may be a sample bias if the initial participants refer other participants that they know well, as these subjects might share the same traits and knowledge.

The research used the Survey Monkey tool and a self-filled questionnaire to collect responses from participants who have a Facebook account. Survey Monkey is a web-based survey tool that allows researchers to design surveys for academic purposes and it creates a distinct URL as soon as a survey is created on its website, which then can be forwarded and accessed by participants both online and in social networks (e.g., on Facebook). Previous researchers have also used the snowball technique, as discussed in the previous section. This study uses the snowball technique as previous research, such as that carried out by Mazman and Usluel (2010), Baltar et al., (2012), and Hyllegard et al., (2011), also used this technique via Facebook.

In the first stage of the survey process, the researcher generated an URL using the Survey Monkey tool. The researcher then posted the survey link on his personal Facebook account and asked qualified Facebook friends (i.e., 18 years old or older, U.K citizens who have Facebook account) to fill in the survey, post the survey link on their Facebook wall, and forward the link to as many potential participants as possible. The researcher also posted the survey link in many Facebook groups (e.g., the Apple brand community on Facebook and the Abertay university student group) with which the researcher was familiar, after gaining the permission of the administrator(s) of such groups. In addition, the researcher posted reminders every week on his personal Facebook wall as well as those of the Facebook groups he was in contact with. After clicking on, and following the URL posted on Facebook, participants were taken to the webpage on Survey Monkey, where they found a short description of the research purpose, which also explained that they must follow at least one brand community on Facebook to be eligible to complete the questionnaire. Their participation in the survey was voluntary and they could terminate the questionnaire at any time they wanted. The details they provided in the questionnaire were confidential and the researcher's contact information was provided to the participants in case they wanted to ask anything regarding the research.

As soon as participants finished reading the cover letter, they were directed to the main survey questionnaire. There were five stages in the main survey's questions. In the first stage, participants answered some qualifying questions, such as if they had a Facebook account. The second stage included questions relating to the demography of the participants; the third stage featured questions related to their personal uses of Facebook; the fourth stage asked questions regarding their perceptions of brand communities on Facebook; and the final stage featured questions relating to

the main constructs of the research; namely, participation, engagement, loyalty, and word-of-mouth. The data collection process lasted for six-weeks.

4.1.2 Instrument development

The survey consisted of five categories of questions, such as qualifying questions, demographic information, personal Facebook use, Facebook brand community types and characteristics, and, finally, the five relationship constructs: participation, engagement, loyalty, and word-of-mouth. The demographic questions were related to participants' information, such as their gender, age, ethnicity, and education. Likewise, the survey also included questions about participants' prior experiences before following the brand community, in which they were asked about their past following behaviour before being a member of the brand community. The demographic details of participants are an important part of surveys, as is described by Negrine and Newbold (1998), who state that demographic questions, such as those about gender, age, ethnicity, and education, etc., provide consumer behaviour which "seek[s] out basic socio-demographic data" (p. 244).

4.1.3 Pilot study

Certain steps were followed to develop the survey instrument. The first and most important step was to conduct a thorough literature review to create a pilot survey. As Reagan (2006) suggests, a comprehensive literature review on the research area sets the ground for the initial survey development. The next stage is to form a focus group and pre-test the survey with individuals who can suggest any suggestions or modifications to the survey to the researcher. Negrine and Newbold (1998) argue that pre-testing helps to "iron out many of the potential difficulties with which the researcher, who is bound up intimately with the subject, cannot always anticipate" (p. 247). In addition, Reagan (2006) and Negrine and Newbold (1998) state that a researcher only needs a small sample of participants to pre-test a survey.

For this study, a convenience sample of 20 participants consisting of Abertay college students, staff, and the researcher's colleagues pre-tested the survey. The participants for the pre-test must have followed a company on Facebook to ensure that they had the same qualifications as the participants who would ultimately be used in the study. The participants completed the survey in person and were asked to take notes on question coherency and understanding, the flow of the

questionnaire, the technical mechanics of the survey, the length of the survey, and grammar (Negrine & Newbold, 2006; Reagan, 2006; Wimmer & Dominick, 2003). Based on the participants' feedback from the pre-test, the survey was modified. First, several page breaks and a progress bar were inserted to ensure the flow and usability of the questionnaire. Second, the wording of questions and responses were modified to enhance clarity.

4.1.4 Operationalization of variables

The next stage of the research was to discuss the measures used in this research investigation. The scale items for each variable used in the study were explained in terms of their operational definitions. The study uses already available and tested scale items to which some modifications have been made to adjust them to suit the context of the current investigation into brand communities on Facebook. The scale items were designed using 7-point Likert scale where participants respond to the items as “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (7).

Table 7: Relationship measures and scale items

Engagement measures (Vivek, 2014):	A. Anything related to the brand community grabs my attention on Facebook. B. I like to learn more about the brand community on Facebook. C. I pay a lot of attention to anything about the brand community on Facebook. D. I spend a lot of discretionary time on the brand community on Facebook. E. I am passionate about the brand community on Facebook. F. Overall, my experiences with the brand community that I follow on Facebook are intense. G. Being part of the brand community I follow on Facebook has increased my level of engagement with the brand.
Participation measures (modified from Koh and Kim, 2004):	A., I have read fan comments in the brand community I follow on Facebook.

Loyalty measures
(modified from A.
Chaudhuri and M.
Holbrook, 2001):

-
- B. I have responded to fan comments in the brand community I follow on Facebook.
 - C. I have watched videos in the brand community I follow on Facebook.
 - D. I have posted comments in the brand community I follow on Facebook.
 - E. I have played games or been involved in other activities in the brand community I follow on Facebook.
 - F. Being part of the brand community I follow on Facebook has increased my level of participation with the brand.
 - A. The products/brands of the company whose brand community I follow on Facebook are my first choice.
 - B. I prefer to use the products/brands of the company whose brand community I follow on Facebook.
 - C. I think the brand community I follow on Facebook has the best offers available in the present.
 - D. I prefer to buy products/brands from the company whose brand community I follow on Facebook instead of from others.
 - E. I hold the company whose brand community I follow on Facebook in high regard.
 - F. I would buy products/brands from the company whose brand community I follow on Facebook in the future.
 - G. In the future, I will actively seek out products/brands from the company whose brand community I follow on Facebook.
 - H. I will purchase products/brands from the company whose brand community I follow on Facebook the next time I need a product it offers.
 - I. Being part of the brand community I follow on Facebook has increased my level of loyalty to the brand.
-

Word-of-mouth measures (modified from Zeithaml, Berry & Parasuraman, 1996):	<p>A. I am proud to say to others that I am a customer of the company/brand whose brand community I follow on Facebook.</p> <p>B. I strongly recommend buying products from the company/brand whose brand community I follow on Facebook.</p> <p>C. I mostly say positive thing about the company/brand whose brand community I follow on Facebook.</p> <p>D. I have spoken favorably to others about the company/brand whose brand community I follow on Facebook.</p> <p>F. Being part of the brand community, I follow on Facebook has increased my level of word-of-mouth activities about the brand.</p>
--	---

4.1.5 Measures of independent variables

Participation

The main categories of participation include information-sharing, interaction, involvement, taking part, contributing, and connecting (Dabholkar, 1990; Koh & Kim, 2004; Casalo et al., 2010; Muntinga et al., 2011; Maslowska et al., 2016; Vivek et al., 2012). This can initiate the engagement process, as it tries to measure how the consumer take part, contribute, and connect with other users by sharing information and providing feedback to brand community on Facebook. The scale items for measuring the types of activities that consumers participate in with online brand communities on Facebook were adapted from Koh & Kim (2004) to reflect the activities available to consumers who follow brand communities on Facebook. The six items were measured using a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (7).

Engagement

The three main categories of engagement (i.e., affective, cognitive, and behavioural) as defined by Brodie et al., (2013) were measured using six items based on Vivek et al., (2014)’s engagement scale. All items were measured using a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (7). The following are examples of the statements that were used to measure consumer engagement: “Anything related to the brand community grabs my attention on

Facebook. I like to learn more about the brand community on Facebook. I pay a lot of attention to anything about the brand community on Facebook. I spend a lot of discretionary time on the brand community on Facebook. I am passionate about the brand community on Facebook. Overall, my experiences with the brand community that I follow on Facebook are intense. Being part of the brand community I follow on Facebook has increased my level of engagement with the brand”.

Cognition is one of the characteristics of engagement and is related to consumers attention to, and absorption with, the brand and brand community during the engagement process. The cognitive aspect of engagement is related to customers’ ability to process and focus their attention on seeking, interpreting, analysing, and summarizing information in the brand community he/she follows on Facebook. Moreover, the examination of cognition within the online consumer engagement context sought to assess whether the consumer learned about the brand, product, or community that he/she followed on the Facebook.

Affection is another consumer engagement dimension that was measured in this study. Affection, within online consumer engagement, seeks to understand the vigour and identity (i.e., intrinsic motivation) presence of a consumer’s experience. The construct attempted to measure the feelings of pleasure and passion that a consumer associated with his/her experience, as well as the consumer’s assessment of the bonding that had occurred with the community he/she follows on Facebook.

The behavioural dimension of engagement was measured in this study in relation to how participants share, learn information, and endorse the brand through the brand community that they are members of on Facebook.

Loyalty

The main categories of loyalty (i.e., attitudinal and behavioural), as defined by Jacoby & Kyner (1973), were measured using six items based on A. Chaudhuri & M. Holbrook (2001)’s loyalty scale. All items were measured using a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (7). The following are examples of the statements that were used to measure loyalty: “The products/brands of the company whose brand community I follow on Facebook are my first choice. I prefer to use the products/brands of the company whose brand community I follow on Facebook. I think the brand community I follow on Facebook has the best offers available in the present. I prefer to buy products/brands from the company whose brand community I follow on Facebook instead of from others. I hold the company whose brand community I follow

on Facebook in high regard. I would buy products/brands from the company whose brand community I follow on Facebook in the future. In the future, I will actively seek out products/brands from the company whose brand community I follow on Facebook. I will purchase products/brands from the company whose brand community I follow on Facebook the next time I need a product it offers. Being part of the brand community I follow on Facebook has increased my level of loyalty to the brand.”

Word-of-mouth

The main categories of WoM (i.e., sharing, learning, and advocating), as defined by Brodie et al, (2013), were measured using six items based on Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman (1996)’s WoM scale. All items were measured using a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (7). The following are examples of the statements that were used to measure WoM: “I am proud to say to others that I am a customer of the company/brand whose brand community I follow on Facebook. I strongly recommend buying products from the company/brand whose brand community I follow on Facebook. I mostly say positive thing about the company/brand whose brand community I follow on Facebook. I have spoken favourably to others about the company/brand whose brand community I follow on Facebook. Being part of the brand community I follow on Facebook has increased my level of word-of-mouth activities about the brand”.

4.1.6 Demographic Variables

Lastly, the demographic variables were measured. The following is the list of demographic variables, along with the operationalization definitions for each as defined by Yan (2005):

Table 8: Demographic variables

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Ethnicity</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Country of residence</i>
Female /male	Age in years	Ethnic group	Highest level of education completed	County where the respondent lives

4.2.1 Quantitative data findings

4.2.2 Data screening

The first step in data analysis is to inspect the data or screen the data. Outliers are the extreme values within a data set that have the potential to skew the findings. Leaving only a few extreme values in a data set can drastically alter the statistical findings. Therefore, it is important to eliminate such cases. One common method for pinpointing outliers is by standardizing the scores. Listwise deletion, also known as complete-case analysis, removes all the associated data for a case that has one or more missing values. This method is most appropriate when running a longitudinal experimental study and when the researcher wants to incorporate only the individuals who participated in the entire process (e.g., the pre-test and post-test). In most other research designs, this is not the optimal method. Pairwise deletion, also known as available-case analysis, utilizes as much available data as possible. For example, within a correlation analysis, data will be utilized wherever there are filled cells for an associated pair of variables. When running an advanced statistical technique, such as structural equation modelling (SEM), there is frequently a strict assumption that there can be no missing cells. In such a case, multiple imputation or median replacement of values are commonly utilized methods by which to fill in missing data.

Hayes (2005) defines data screening as “the process of examining the data file for errors in the data file itself”. He argues that data screening is important and essential in order to make sure that the collected data is accurate and to draw research conclusions correctly. He further emphasizes that creating a table with minimum and maximum values from the data starts the process of data screening, which helps to identify whether the data has any errors. In this study, for every variable, a separate table with maximum and minimum value was generated. This study used a 7-point Likert scale to measure the constructs starting from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (7). The table showing the minimum and maximum values must therefore show data between the 1 to 7 range. If data in the table does not fit into these categories (i.e., 1 to 7), this indicates that there is an error in the data. This, in combination with as data screening, will find any missing data either in the table or in the data set.

4.2.3 Descriptive statistics and the measurement model

The next phase in the data analysis plan was to compute the descriptive statistics of each variable. Descriptive statistics summarise the data and describe each variable (Hayes, 2005). Additionally, descriptive statistics provide information about the sample (Hayes, 2005). A confirmatory factor analysis attempts to confirm a good fit by identifying a measurement model. The measurement model was then analysed to see if the fit was good for the specified mode. Confirmatory factor analysis was chosen for this study as it is a variable reduction technique that is used when variables are highly correlated. It reduces the number of observed variables to a smaller number of principal components that account for most of the variance of the observed variables and it is a procedure suitable for a large sample.

4.2.4 Introductory data analysis

The data collection process lasted for six-weeks and 749 total responses were received during this time. Among the 749 total responses, 197 were excluded because the participants either did not follow any brand community or did not complete the questionnaire. In addition, 19 were not included in the study because the participants were not the resident in the UK. Hence, 551 usable questionnaires were collected for the study.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the quantitative study of this research used structural equation modelling. Hair et al., (1992) argue that a sample size of around 200 participants is good and, at the same time, they argue that sample of less than 50 participants does not suit the model fit. Although there is no hard and fast rule for the exact sample size required for structural equation modelling (MacCallum et al., 1999), the majority of the previous studies indicate that anything above 200 is justifiable (Boomsma, 1982, 1985). In this sense, 551 is well above the required range of sampling size for the use of SEM in this study.

4.2.5 Participants' characteristics

A total of 749 participants took part in the survey for this study and, after sorting out the incomplete responses, 551 complete responses were selected for the further analysis. Among the 551, 52.2 %

(n=551) were male and 44.8 % (n=551) were female. Among the 551, 49.2 % (n=275) were in the 18-30 age group, 28.3 % (n=156) were in the 31-40 age group, 18.9 % (n=104) were in the 41-50 age group and 2.9 % (n=16) were in the 51 and above age group.

The educational background of the participants was as follows: some college but no degree, 33.9% (n=187); bachelor's degree, 34.2% (n=189); masters or doctoral degree, 22.7% (n=125); some high school no diploma, 6% (n=33); and prefer not to say, 3.1% (n=17). Most of the participants were White British, 56.3 % (n=310) and Asian, 27.2% (n=152), followed by African, 7.2% (n=41). 100 % (n=551) of the participants were resident in the United Kingdom.

Table 9: Quantitate survey participants' demographics (n=551)

	n	%		n	%		n	%
Gender			Ethnicity			Education		
Male	304	55.2	White British	310	56.3	Some High School No Diploma	33	6
Female	247	44.8	Asian	152	27.6	Some College No Degree	187	33.9
Age			African	41	7.4	Bachelor's Degree	189	34.3
18-30	275	49.9	Australian	2	0.4	Master's or Doctoral Degree	125	22.7
31-40	156	28.3	Caucasian	5	0.9	Prefer Not to say	17	3.1
41-50	104	18.9	American	6	1.1			
50 and above	16	2.9	Mixed British	6	1.1			
Country of Residence			Asian British	22	4			
United Kingdom	551	100	African British	2	0.4			
			European	2	0.4			

4.2.6 Participants' Facebook Use

The data shows that a total of 551 participants responded regarding their length of being a Facebook user. The large number belongs to those who had been members for 6 to 10 years (429), followed by 3 to 5 years (93), 0-2 years (14), and 11 years or more (15). As far as participants' Facebook activities are concerned, most of the participants (80.9 % (n=446)) spent their time reading, liking, and commenting on posts and chatting with friends, family members, close groups, communities, and brands, etc. 84.8% (n=476) spent their time sharing messages, profile information, pictures, and videos with friends, groups, and communities, etc. 49.2% (n=271) spent time seeking information, endorsing brands, and sharing their experiences with friends, groups, communities, brands, etc. 41.4% (n=137) actively recommended product(s) to friends, groups, communities, and helped others to use these products. 27.2% (n=150) used Facebook occasionally

by reading, liking, or commenting on Facebook activities with friends, groups, communities, brands, etc. 3.1% (n=17) spent their time on Facebook playing online games and engaging in other activities (e.g., Farmville, Mafia Wars), followed by spending some time reading magazines and scrolling in Messenger.

Most of the participants, 39 % (n=215), spent 11 hours and more on Facebook; 30.7 % (n=169) spent 6-10 hours on Facebook; 20.3% (n=112) spent 3-5 hours on Facebook; and 9.6 % (n=53) spent 0-2 hours on Facebook.

In terms of the brand communities they follow on Facebook, the types of brand communities that they were members of comprised: Apparel, 37.6% (n=207), automobiles, 27.8% (n=153), technology, 76.2% (n=420), food and beverages, 70.1% (n=386), and entertainment, 62.6% (n=345). Other categories, such as online games and magazines and newspapers, were categories of brand communities for which participants could make multiple responses. The weekly time spent in the brand communities that the participants followed on Facebook is as follows: 27.8.0% (n=153) spent 6-10 hours; 24.9% (n=137) spent 3-5 hours; 14.3% (n=79) spent 1-2 hours; 14.0% (n=77) spent less than an hour; and 13.2 % (n=73) rarely spent time in brand communities on Facebook. Likewise, their years of experience with the brand community were as follows: 55.4 % (n=305) had 3-5 years of experience with the brand community they follow; 33.9% (n=187) had 0-2 years of experience; 10% (n=55) had 6-10 years of experience; and .07% (n=4) had 11 years and more experience.

4.2.7 Questionnaire responses, tables, and figures

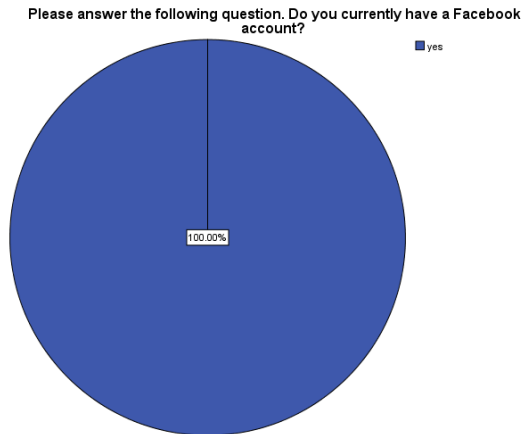
The details of the participants' responses from the questionnaire and introductory analysis of the data are as follows:

Q1: Do you currently have a Facebook account?

Since this survey was designed to collect responses from those who have a Facebook account and are involved in activities on Facebook, all the respondents must have a Facebook account in order to qualify to answer the answers that followed. Facebook is the most popular social network worldwide with a global usage penetration of 22.9%. Its user percentage is very high in the UK,

where it had around 44 million users as of July 2017, which is the 11th highest rate of users in the world (Statista, 2017). Facebook had 1.32 billion daily active users, on average, in June 2017 and 2.01 billion monthly active users as of June 30, 2017 (Facebook, 2017).

Figure 12: Quantitative survey (Facebook account)

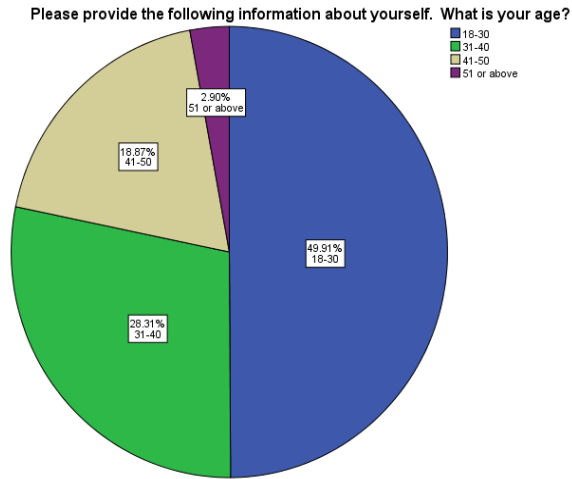


Q2: What is your age?

The largest number of respondents fell into the 25 to 35 years old category of the UK population, which is very active on social media. In January 2017, the highest number of Facebook users in the United Kingdom (UK) was found to be those aged between 25 and 34 years old, of which 5.2 million were women and 5.5 million were men: the older in age group is, the lower the user numbers become (Statista, 2017). The age distribution of Facebook users in the United Kingdom from May 2013 to February 2017 suggests that 21% of Facebook users, in April 2015, were aged 25 to 34, whereas the most recent survey carried out in February 2017 suggests that 19 percent of responding Facebook users were aged between 15 and 24 years old. Respondents aged between 25 and 34 years of age accounted for 23%, which marks an increase of 2% between May 2013 and January 2017.

Out of a total of 551 respondents, 275 were aged 18 to 30; 156 were aged 31 to 40; 104 were aged 41 to 50; and 51 were 60 or older. As the younger UK population is very active on social media, the 18 to 30 age group has the highest response rate in the survey, whereas as the age groups got older, the number of respondents went down, which matches the data trends as well.

Figure 13: Quantitative survey (age)

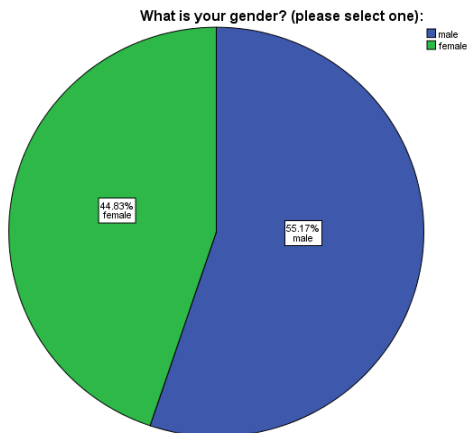


Q3: What is your gender?

The worldwide distribution of active Facebook users, as of July 2017, suggests that 56% of active users are men in the 13 to 65 age group and above, while 46% are women in the same age group. There is a large gap within the 18 to 35 age group, where 12% of global active Facebook users are women between the ages of 18 and 24 and 18% are men. 12% of Facebook's global active users were women between the ages of 25 and 35, whereas 17% were men in the same group. This suggests that the male population within the 18 to 35 age group is more active on Facebook than the female population.

The survey data shows that there were 304 male and 247 female respondents, respectively, and that three of the respondents did not disclose their age. The largest number of respondents fell into the 25 to 34 age group, in which the number of male Facebook users are greater than female users in the UK. Facebook is the leading social network and it had over 44 million monthly users in the UK alone in 2017. Facebook's demographics in the UK are very much even, with 49% male users and 51% female users. 60% of the UK population has a Facebook account and the highest number of users are in the 13 to 34 years of age group (thinkdigitalfirst, 2017).

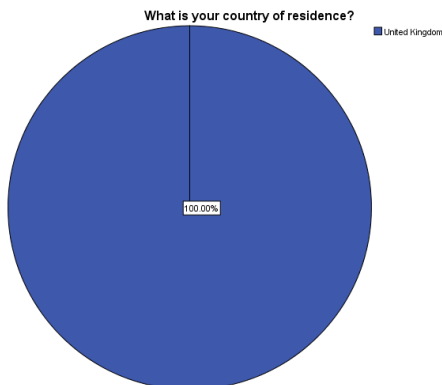
Figure 14: Quantitative survey (gender)



Q4: What is your country of residence?

The target respondents are from the UK and, hence, all 551 participants responded that their place of residence was the UK.

Figure 15: Quantitative survey (country of residence)

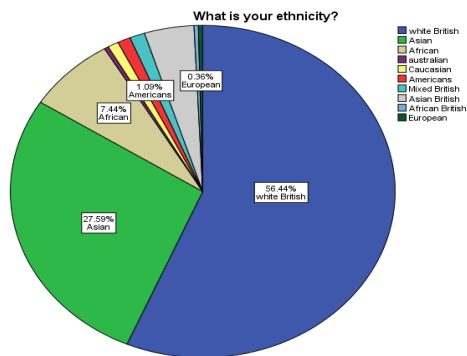


Q5: What is your ethnicity?

According to the Office for National Statistics, there are 64.6 million people living in the UK. The distribution of their ethnicity shows that 87.2% are white British, while Asian (i.e., Pakistani, Indian, Bangladeshi, or other) groups make up almost 7% percent of the population, and Black groups account for almost 4 % (IRR 2017). The UK population is diverse in nature, which the survey response shows. Most respondents stated that they were either white British (311) or Asian

(152). The other major respondents were Africans (41) and Asian British (23), whereas the other minor responses were Australian (2), Caucasian (5), American (6). African British (2), and European (2).

Figure 16: Quantitative survey (ethnicity)

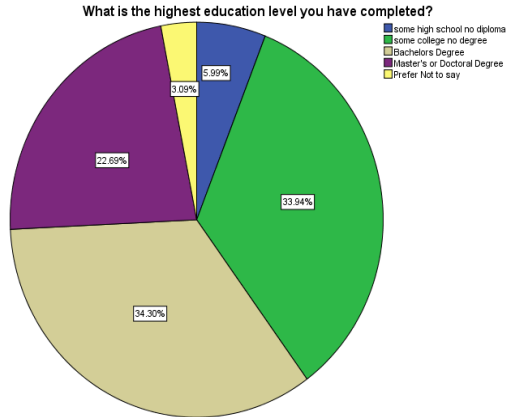


Q6: What is the highest level of education you have completed?

Young adults are the most active social media users in the UK, and 59% of adults with an educational level of high school or less use at least one of the social media platforms. 73% of adults with some college education use one of the social media platforms and 78% of college graduates use one of the social media platforms, as of 2016 (Pew Research Centre, 2016).

Out of the 551 respondents to the questionnaire, 33 had some high school experience but no diploma; 187 had some college experience but no degree; 189 had a bachelor's degree; 125 had either a Masters or doctoral degree; and 17 indicated that they did not want to disclose their educational background. There is strong relationship between those with some college experience but no degree and those with bachelor's degrees, as their response rates were high.

Figure 17: Quantitative survey (education)

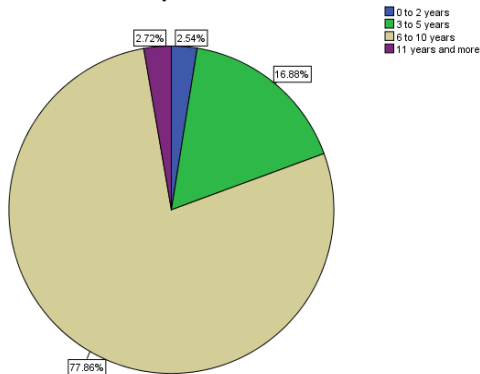


Q7: How long have you been a Facebook user?

Facebook's growth in the last few decades has been tremendous, especially in the developing world. The use of mobile apps, such as Android, the popularity of the iPhone, and high-bandwidth connections are some of the reasons for this. Facebook has gained 744 million users in Asia and the rest of the world since hitting 1 billion total users; it as also gained 41 million users in the US and Canada. Facebook's growth started after 2010 and people are using it more and more (TechCrunch, 2017). In fact, 66% of Facebook's monthly users visit the site each day, compared to 55% when Facebook hit 1 billion users. Our data shows that, out of the 551 total responses, the largest number had had a Facebook account for 6 to 10 years (429); 93 had had a Facebook account for 3 to 5 years; 14 had had a Facebook account for 0 to 2 years; and 15 had had a Facebook account for 11 years or more.

Figure 18: Quantitative survey (length of time as a Facebook member)

Please provide the following information about your Facebook usage. How long have you been a Facebook user?

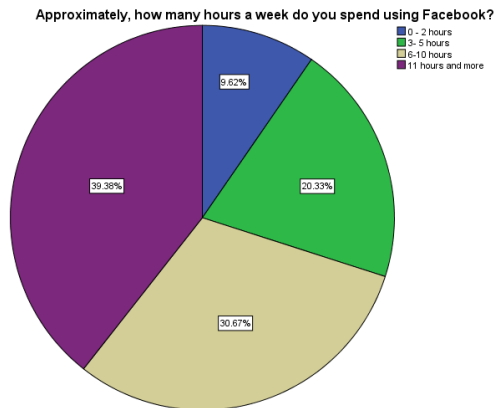


Q8: How many hours a week do you spend using Facebook?

Past research has shown that users spend 2.6 hours on Facebook every day (Lilley, Grodzinsky, & Gumbus, 2012), whereas a survey by WhatsApp found that their global users spend around 50 minutes every day on Facebook (Business Insider, 2016). Likewise, in the UK, a study by Gadget Insurance Provider (www.row.co.uk) reported that Facebook users spent around 850 million hours in the month of March 2016 on the platform, which equates to 26.5 hours per month per individual (Webb, 2016).

The data shows that 217 participants used Facebook for more than 11 hours; 169 participants used Facebook for 6 to 10 hours; 122 participants used Facebook for 3 to 5 hours; and 53 participants used Facebook for 0 to 2 hours a week, respectively. The highest number of participants used Facebook for a long time, as the data suggests.

Figure 19: Quantitative survey (time on Facebook)

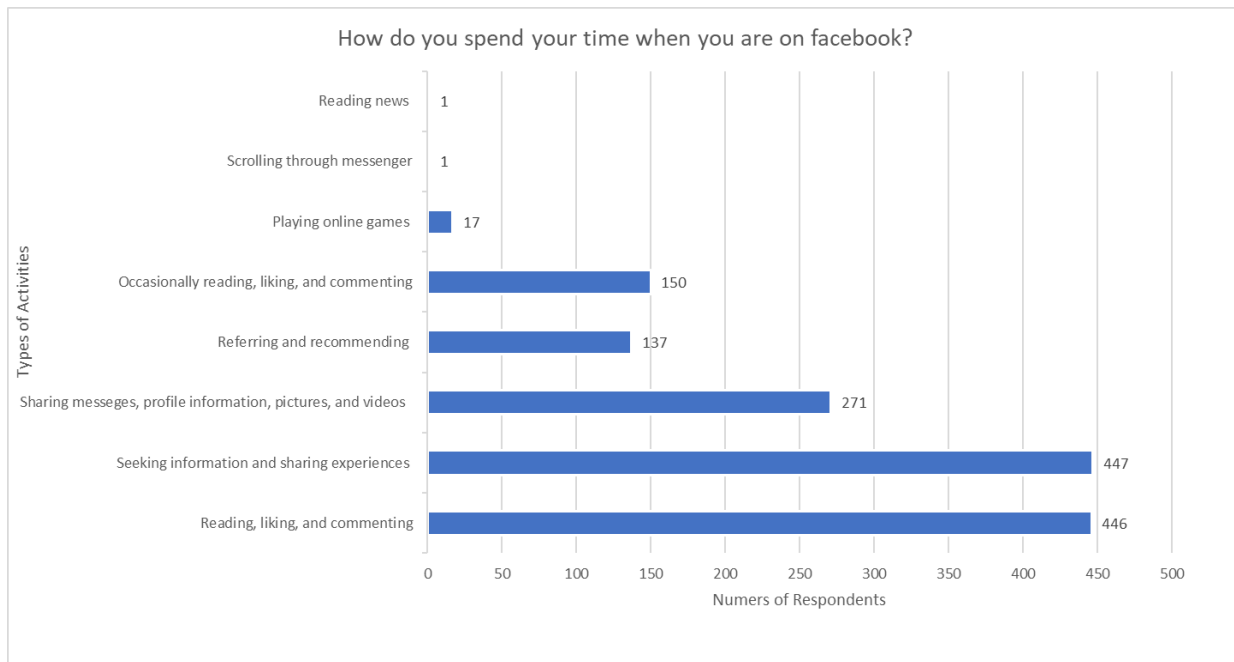


Q9: How do you spend your time when you are on Facebook?

A total of 446 participants stated that they spent their time on Facebook reading, liking, and commenting on posts, and chatting with friends, family members, close groups, communities, brands, etc. A total of 467 participants stated they spent their time on Facebook sharing messages, profile information, pictures, and videos with friends, groups, communities, etc. A total of 271 participants stated they spent their time on Facebook seeking information, endorsing brands, and sharing experiences with friends, groups, communities, brands, etc.

A total of 137 participants stated that they spent their time on Facebook actively referring product(s) to friends, groups, communities, and helping others to use the products etc. A total of 150 participants stated they spent their time on Facebook occasionally reading, liking, or commenting on Facebook activities with friends, groups, communities, brands, etc. A total of 17 participants stated they spent their time on Facebook playing online games and engaging in other activities (e.g., Farmville, Mafia Wars), etc. A total of 2 participants stated that they spent their time on Facebook scrolling through Messenger and one 1 participant said that they read the news.

Figure 20: Quantitative survey (activities on Facebook)

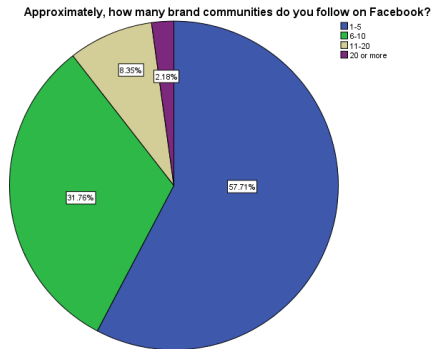


Q10: How many brand communities do you follow on Facebook?

A survey suggests that close to 90% of users on Facebook say that they follow at least one brand community on Facebook (Lab42, 2017). Additionally, 50% say that they find the brand's Facebook page more useful than the company's website. Of the Facebook users who followed brand communities, 82% said that Facebook is a good place to interact with brands; 75% said that they felt more connected to the brand communities on Facebook; and 69% said that they liked a brand community because a friend in their network did (Purely Branded, 2017).

Among the 551 respondents, 318 participants stated that they follow 1 to 5 brand communities; 175 states that they follow 6 to 10 brand communities, 46 stated that they follow 1 to 20 brand communities; and 12 stated that they follow 20 or more brand communities.

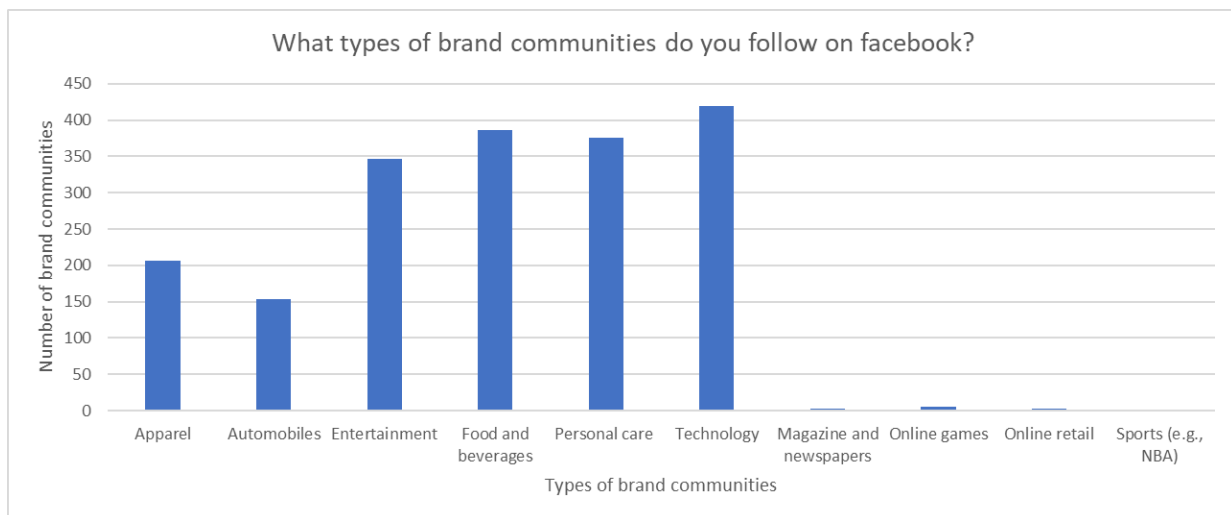
Figure 21: Quantitative survey (number of brand communities)



Q11: What types of brand communities you follow on Facebook?

The participants stated that the brand communities that they follow comprised: Apparel (207); automobiles (153); entertainment (346); food and beverages (386); personal care (376); technology (420); and others ticked the “Please specify” category, which referred to brand communities related to magazines and newspapers, online games, online retail, and sports, such as the NBA. Entertainment and technology brands were the most followed brands on Facebook among the participants.

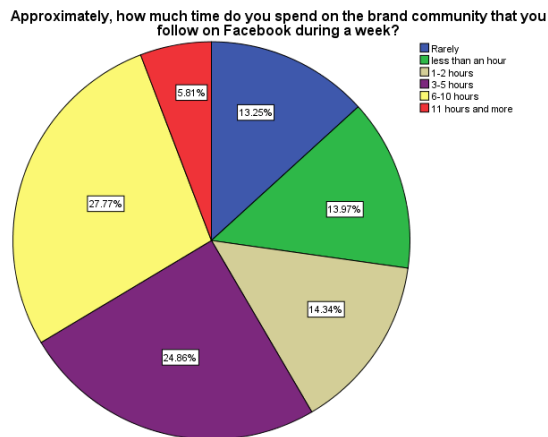
Figure 22: Quantitative survey (types of brand communities)



Q12: How much time do you spend on the brand community that you follow on Facebook during a typical week?

551 participants out of 55 answered this question. 153 answered that they spent 6 to 10 hours on Facebook; 137 answered that they spent 3 to 5 hours on Facebook; 79 answered that they spent less than an hour on Facebook; 77 answered that they rarely spent time on Facebook; and 32 answered that they spent 11 hours or more on Facebook in a typical week.

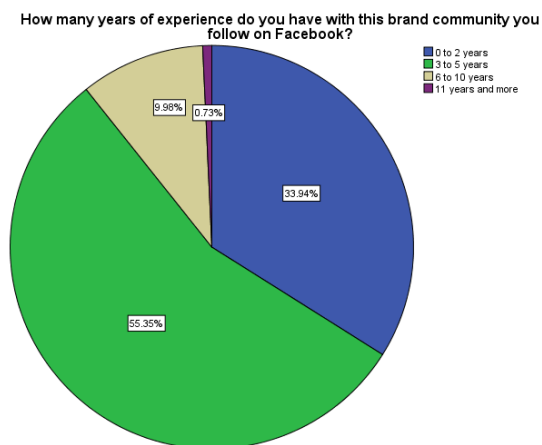
Figure 23: Quantitative survey (time spent in brand communities)



Q13: How many years of experience do you have with the brand community you follow on Facebook?

The data shows that out of 551 participants, 305 answered 3 to 5 years; 187 participants answered 0 to 2 years; 55 participants answered 6 to 10 years; and 4 participants answered 11 years or more.

Figure 24: Quantitative survey (length of experience with brand communities)



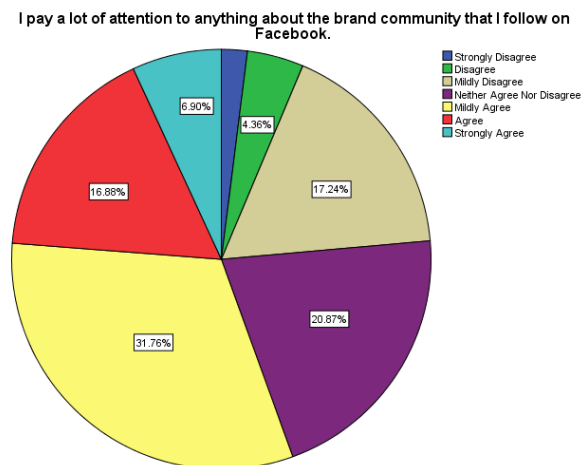
Engagement

Consumer engagement in online brand communities has attracted the attention of both marketers and academics. Understanding consumers' changing behaviour, along with advancements in technology, has become a marketing and academic priority as consumers express their mental, physical, and emotional attitudes through the new platform called social media by creating embedded brand communities for interacting and sharing experiences.

Q14: I pay a lot of attention to anything about the brand community that I follow on Facebook.

The data shows that out of 551 participants, 175 stated they mildly agree; 115 participants neither agree nor disagree; 95 participants mildly disagree; 24 participants disagree; 93 participants agree; 38 participants strongly agree; and 11 participants strongly disagree.

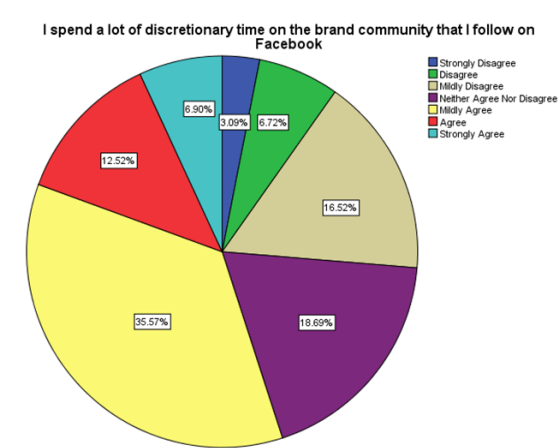
Figure 25: Quantitative survey (attention paid to the brand community)



Q15: I spend a lot of discretionary time on the brand community that I follow on Facebook.

The data shows that, out of 551 participants, 196 participants stated that they mildly agree; 103 participants stated, “neither agree nor disagree”; 91 participants stated that they mildly disagree; 37 participants stated that they disagree; 17 participants stated that they strongly disagree; 38 participants state that they strongly agree; and 69 agree.

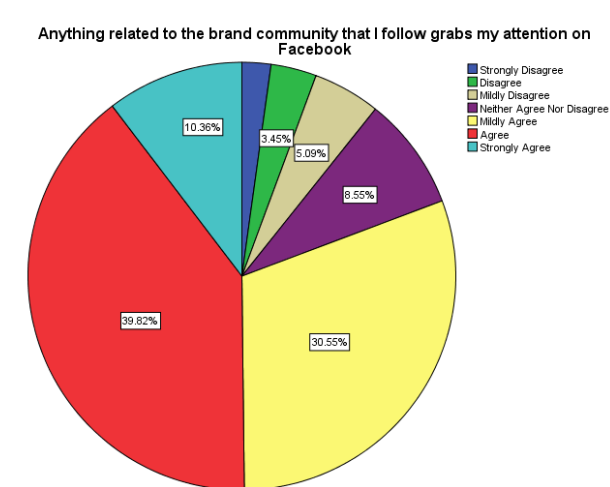
Figure 26: Quantitative survey (discretionary time spent with the brand community)



Q16: Anything related to the brand community that I follow grabs my attention on Facebook.

The data shows that, out of 551 participants, 219 participants stated that they agree; 168 participants stated they mildly agree; 57 participants stated they strongly agree; 47 participants neither agree nor disagree; 28 mildly disagree; 19 disagree; and 12 strongly disagree.

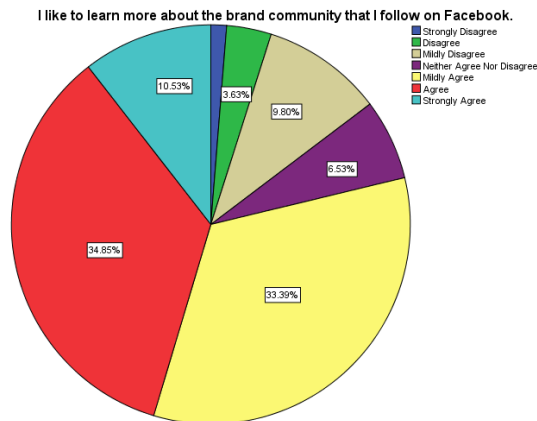
Figure 27: Quantitative survey (attention grabbed by anything related to the brand community)



Q17: I like to learn more about the brand community that I follow on Facebook.

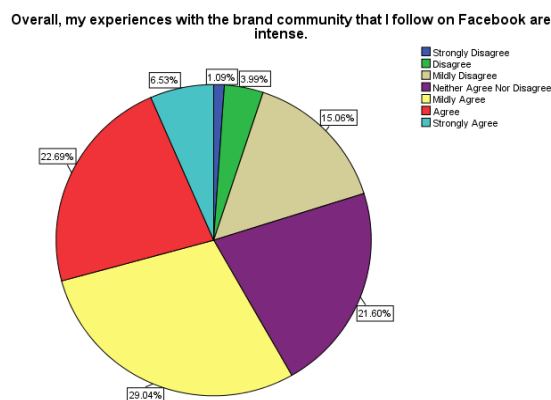
The data shows that, out of 551 participants, 192 stated that they agree; 184 stated that they mildly agree; 58 stated they strongly agree; 36 stated that they neither agree nor disagree; 54 mildly disagree; 20 stated that they disagree; and 7 stated that they strongly disagree.

Figure 28: Quantitative survey (I like to learn about the brand community)



Q18: Overall, my experiences with the brand community that I follow on Facebook are intense. The data shows that 125 participants out of 551 stated that they agree; 160 stated that they mildly agree; 119 stated that they neither agree nor disagree; 83 stated that they mild disagree; 36 participants strongly agree; 23 participants disagree; and 6 stated that they strongly disagree.

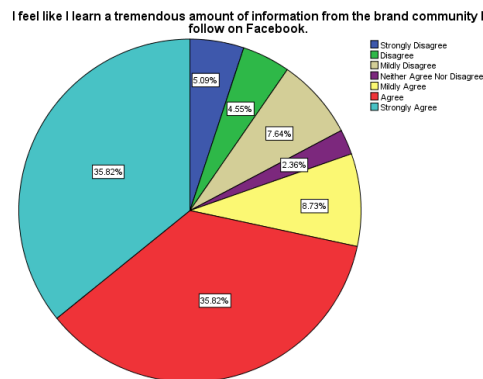
Figure 29: Quantitative survey (intense experience with the brand community)



Q19: I feel like I learn a tremendous amount of information from the brand community I follow on Facebook.

The data shows that 551 participants responded to this question. 197 stated that they strongly agree with this question; 197 agree; 48 mildly agree; 13 neither agree nor disagree; 42 mildly disagree; 25 disagree; and 28 strongly disagree.

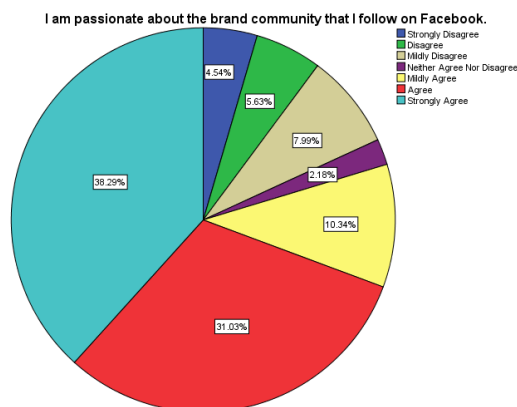
Figure 30: Quantitative survey (learning information from the brand community)



Q20: I am passionate about the brand community that I follow on Facebook.

The data shows that 551 participants responded to this question out of 791 participants. 211 participants stated that they strongly agree; 171 stated they agree; 57 mildly agree; 12 participants neither agree nor disagree; 44 mildly disagree; 31 participants disagree; and 25 strongly disagree.

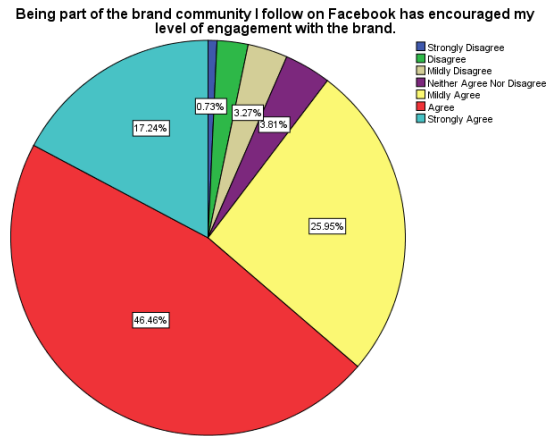
Figure 31: Quantitative survey (passion for the brand community)



Q21: Being part of the brand community I follow on Facebook has increased my level of engagement with the brand.

The data shows that 551 participants responded to this question out of 791 participants. 256 stated that they agree with this statement; 143 mildly agree; 95 participants strongly agree; 21 participants neither agree nor disagree; 18 mildly disagree; 14 disagree; and 4 strongly disagree.

Figure 32: Quantitative survey (engagement with the brand community)



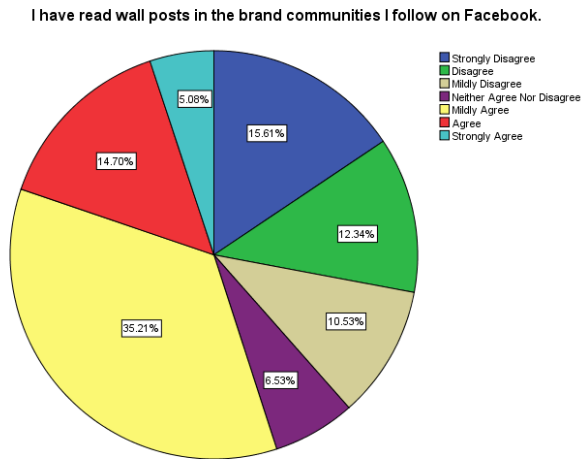
Participation

Participation, such as interaction and sharing information, strengthens the links between customers and brands in online brand communities. Thanks to the arrival of online brand communities embedded in social networks, users can post, share, and comment, etc., about their ideas both with the company or among themselves, which encourages their interest, which leads to engagement with the brand communities and, finally, engagement with the brand.

Q22: I have read wall posts in the brand communities I follow on Facebook.

The data shows 551 that participants responded to this question. 81 stated that they agree with this statement; 194 mildly agree; 28 participants strongly agree; 36 participants neither agree nor disagree; 58 mildly disagree; 68 disagree; and 86 strongly disagree.

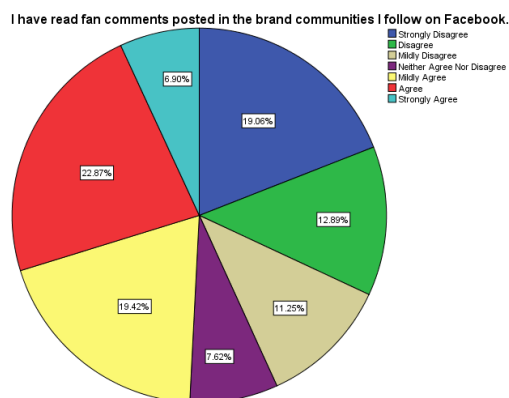
Figure 33: Quantitative survey (reading wall posts in the online brand community)



Q23: I have read fan comments posted in the brand communities I follow on Facebook.

The data shows that 551 participants responded to this question out of 791 participants. 38 participants strongly agree; 126 stated that they agree with this statement; 107 mildly agree; 42 participants neither agree nor disagree; 62 mildly disagree; 71 disagree; and 105 strongly disagree.

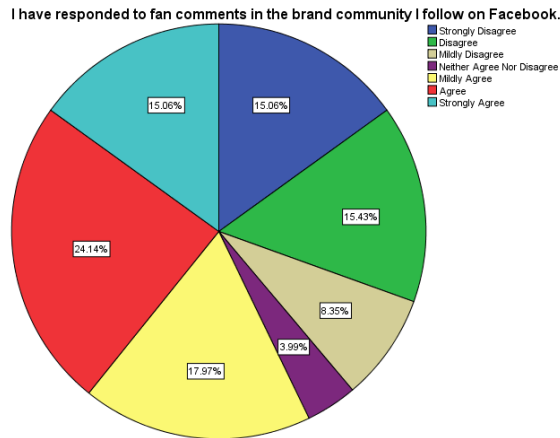
Figure 34: Quantitative survey (reading fan comments in the online brand community)



Q24: I have responded to fan comments in the brand community I follow on Facebook.

The data shows that 551 participants responded to this question out of 791 participants. 83 participants strongly agree; 133 stated that they agree with this statement; 99 mildly agree; 22 participants neither agree nor disagree; 46 mildly disagree; 85 disagree; and 83 strongly disagree.

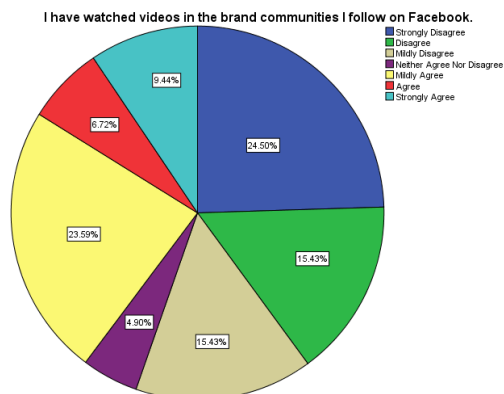
Figure 35: Quantitative survey (responding to fan comments in the online brand community)



Q25: I have watched videos in the brand communities I follow on Facebook.

The data shows that 551 participants responded to this question out of 791 participants. 52 participants strongly agree; 37 stated that they agree with this statement; 130 mildly agree; 27 participants neither agree nor disagree; 85 mildly disagree; 85 disagree; and 135 strongly disagree.

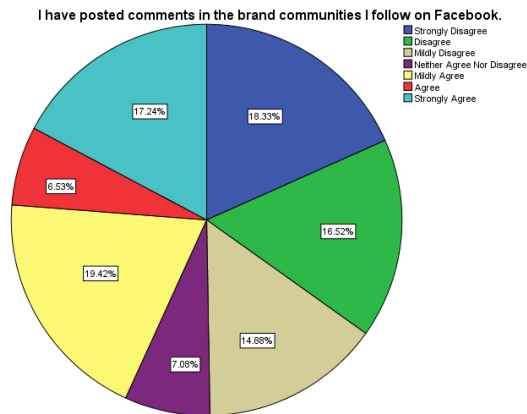
Figure 36: Quantitative survey (watching videos in the online brand community)



Q26: I have posted comments in the brand communities I follow on Facebook.

The data shows that, out of 551 participants, 95 strongly agree; 36 stated that they agree with this statement; 107 mildly agree; 39 participants neither agree nor disagree; 82 mildly disagree; 91 mildly disagree; and 156 strongly disagree.

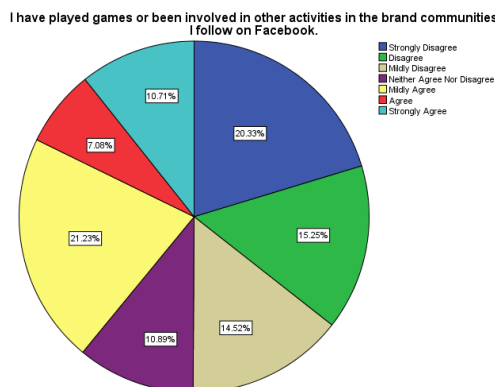
Figure 37: Quantitative survey (posting comments in the online brand community)



Q27: I have played games or been involved in other activities in the brand communities I follow on Facebook.

The data shows that, out of 551 participants, 59 strongly agree; 39 stated that they agree with this statement; 117 mildly agree; 60 participants neither agree nor disagree; 80 mildly disagree; 84 disagree; and 112 strongly disagree.

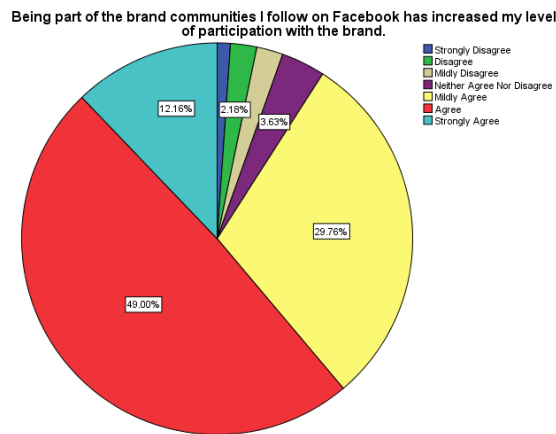
Figure 38: Quantitative survey (playing games in the online brand community)



Q28: Being part of the brand communities I follow on Facebook has increased my level of participation with the brand.

The data shows out that, out of 551 participants, 67 strongly agree; 270 stated that they agree with this statement; 164 mildly agree; 20 participants neither agree nor disagree; 12 mildly disagree; 12 disagree; and 6 strongly disagree.

Figure 39: Quantitative survey (participation in the online brand community)



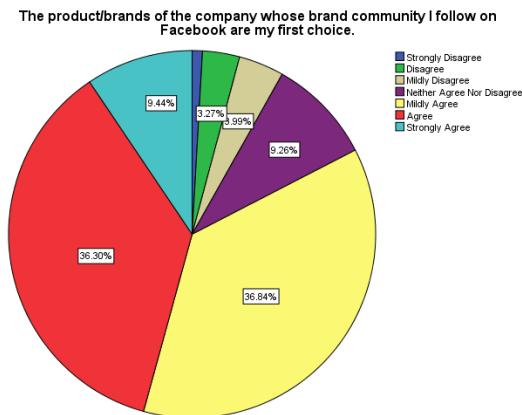
Loyalty

Online brand communities embedded in social networks allow consumers to participate, become involved with and, finally, become engaged with the community. This then develops into brand commitment and brand preferences, resulting in behavioural or attitudinal loyalty.

Q29: The products/brands of the company whose brand community I follow on Facebook are my first choice.

The data shows that, out of 551 participants, 52 strongly agree; 200 stated that they agree with this statement; 203 mildly agree; 51 participants neither agree nor disagree; 22 mildly disagree; 18 disagree; and 5 strongly disagree.

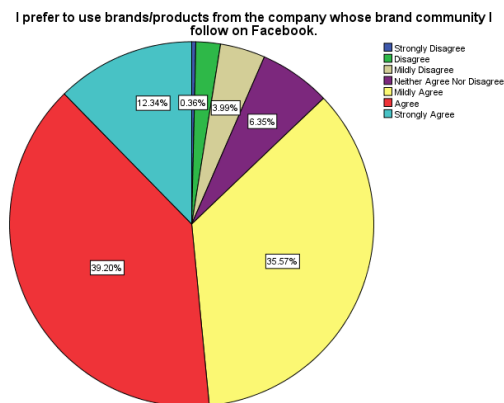
Figure 40: Quantitative survey (first choice)



Q30: I prefer to use brands/products from the company whose brand community I follow on Facebook.

The data shows that, out of 551 participants, 68 participants strongly agree; 216 stated that they agree with this statement; 196 mildly agree; 35 participants neither agree nor disagree; 22 mildly disagree; 12 disagree; and 2 strongly disagree.

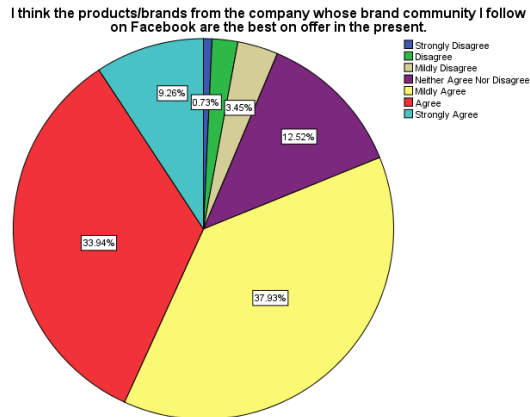
Figure 41: Quantitative survey (prefer to use)



Q31: I think the products/brands from the company whose brand community I follow on Facebook are the best on offer in the present.

The data shows that, out of 551 participants, 187 stated that they agree with this statement; 209 mildly agree; 69 participants neither agree nor disagree; 19 mildly disagree; 12 disagree; and 4 strongly disagree.

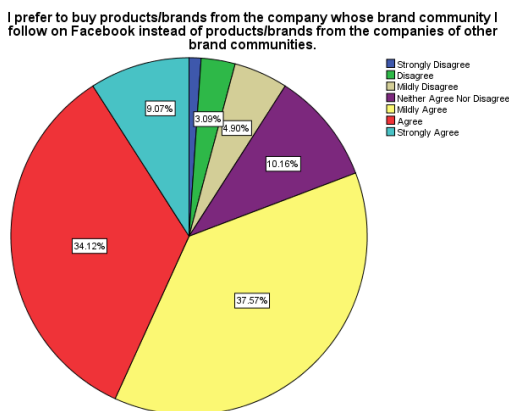
Figure 42: Quantitative survey (best offer)



Q32: I prefer to buy products/brands from the company whose brand community I follow on Facebook instead of products/brands from the companies of other brand communities.

The data shows that, out of 551 participants, 50 participants strongly agree; 188 stated that they agree to this statement; 207 mildly agree; 56 participants neither agree nor disagree; 27 mildly disagree; 17 disagree; and 6 strongly disagree.

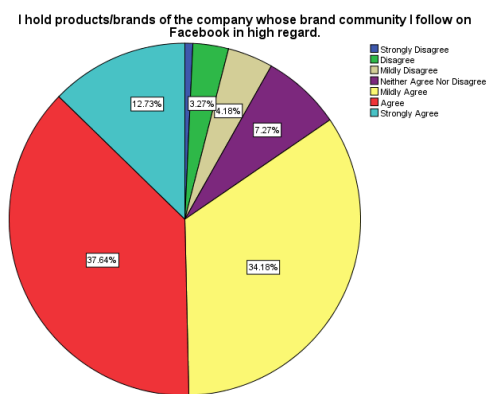
Figure 43: Quantitative survey (prefer to buy)



Q33: I hold products/brands of the company whose brand community I follow on Facebook in high regard.

The data shows that, out of 551 participants, 70 participants strongly agree; 207 stated that they agree with this statement; 188 mildly agree; 40 participants neither agree nor disagree; 23 mildly disagree; 18 disagree; and 4 strongly disagree.

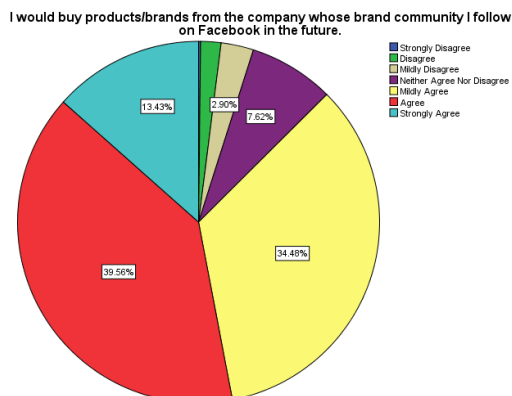
Figure 44: Quantitative survey (high regard)



Q34: I would buy products/brands from the company whose brand community I follow on Facebook in the future.

The data shows that, out of 551 participants, 74 strongly agree; 218 stated that they agree with this statement; 190 mildly agree; 42 participants neither agree nor disagree; 16 mildly disagree; 10 disagree; and 1 strongly disagrees.

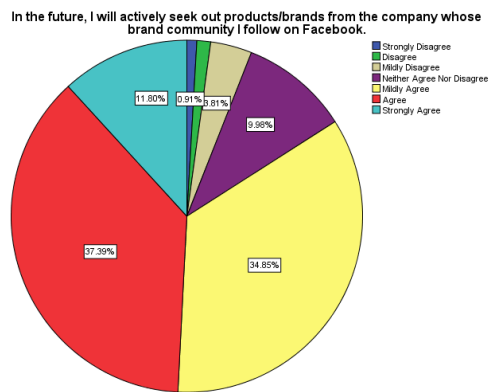
Figure 45: Quantitative survey (future purchase)



Q35: In the future, I will actively seek out products/brands from the company whose brand community I follow on Facebook.

The data shows that, out of 551 participants, 65 strongly agree; 206 stated that they agree with this statement; 192 mildly agree; 55 participants neither agree nor disagree; 21 mildly disagree; 7 disagree; and 5 strongly disagree.

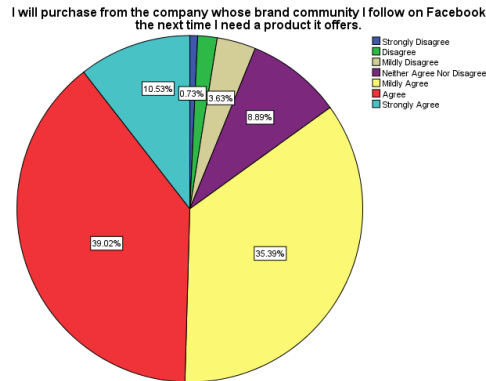
Figure 46: Quantitative survey (seeking products)



Q36: I will purchase from the company whose brand community I follow on Facebook the next time I need a product it offers.

The data shows that, out of 551 participants, 58 strongly agree; 215 stated that they agree with this statement; 195 mildly agree; 49 participants neither agree nor disagree; 20 mildly disagree; 10 disagree; and 4 strongly disagree.

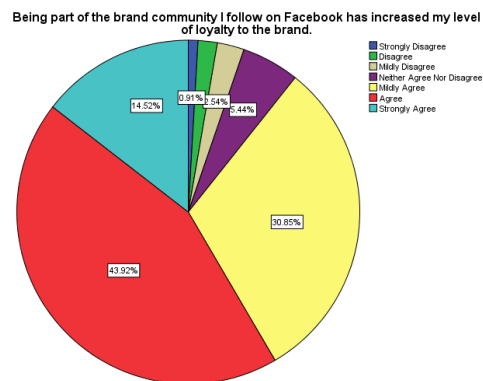
Figure 47: Quantitative survey (product offers)



Q37: Being part of the brand community I follow on Facebook has increased my level of loyalty to the brand.

The data shows that, out of 551 participants, 80 strongly agree; 242 stated that they agree with this statement; 170 mildly agree; 30 participants neither agree nor disagree; 14 mildly disagree; 10 disagree; and 5 strongly disagree.

Figure 48: Quantitative survey (increased loyalty)



Word-of-mouth:

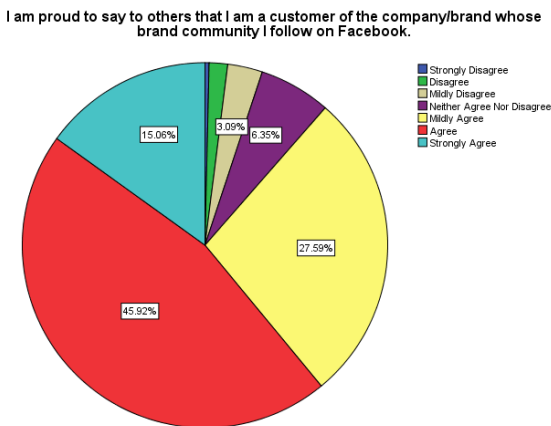
The significance of word-of-mouth has increased tremendously in online brand communities (De Valck et al., 2009). In today's digital world of effective social networks, recommendations spread fast, can reach large audiences, and are cost effective (Brodie et al., 2013; Doorn et al., 2010). On

digital platforms, a customer's word-of-mouth activities are strongly affected by the customer's online activities, such as reviewing, blogging, etc. Such activities provide customers with a platform on which to influence each other. When engaged with a brand community, customers give feedback and share their experiences with other members. If their experiences are good, customers are more likely to spread positive word-of-mouth and recommend the brand to others.

Q38: I am proud to say to others that I am a customer of the company/brand whose brand community I follow on Facebook.

The data shows out that, of 551 participants, 83 strongly agree; 253 stated that they agree with this statement; 152 mildly agree; 35 participants neither agree nor disagree; 17 mildly disagree; 9 disagree; and 2 strongly disagree.

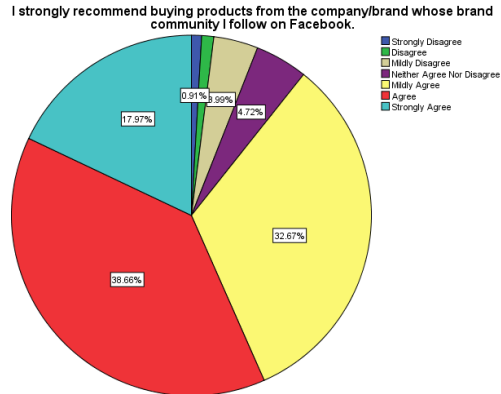
Figure 49: Quantitative survey (pride)



Q39: I strongly recommend buying products from the company/brand whose brand community I follow on Facebook.

The data shows that, out of 551 participants, 99 strongly agree; 213 stated that they agree with this statement; 180 mildly agree; 26 participants neither agree nor disagree; 22 mildly disagree; 6 disagree; and 5 strongly disagree.

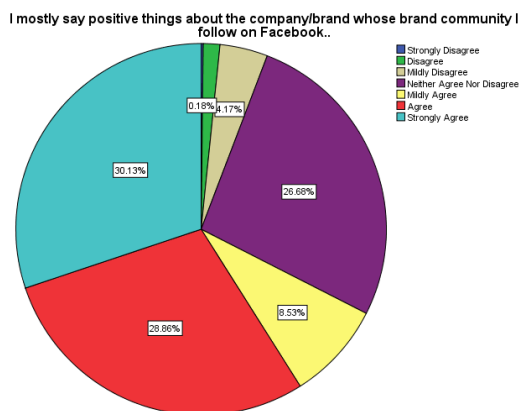
Figure 50: Quantitative survey (recommending)



Q40: I mostly say positive things about the company/brand whose brand community I follow on Facebook.

The data shows that, out of 551 participants, 166 strongly agree; 159 stated that they agree with this statement; 47 mildly agree; 147 participants neither agree nor disagree; 23 mildly disagree; 8 disagree; and 1 strongly disagrees.

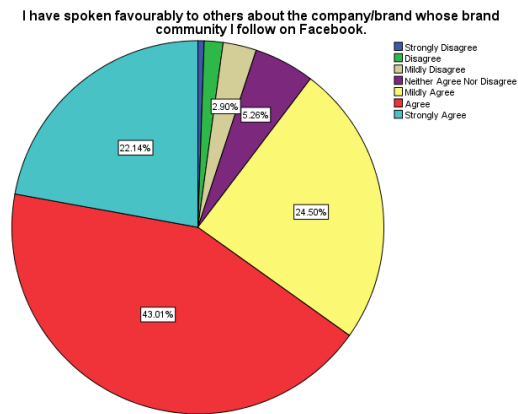
Figure 51: Quantitative survey (saying positive things)



Q41. I have spoken favourably to others about the company/brand whose brand community I follow on Facebook.

The data shows that, out of 551 participants, 122 strongly agree; 237 stated that they agree with this statement; 135 mildly agree; 29 participants neither agree nor disagree; 16 mildly disagree; 9 disagree; and 3 strongly disagree.

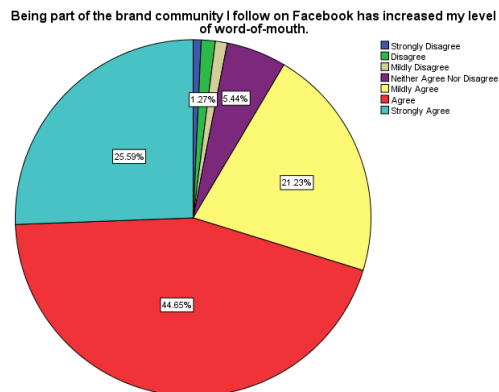
Figure 52: Quantitative survey (speaking favourably)



Q42: Being part of the brand community I follow on Facebook has increased my level of word-of-mouth.

The data shows that, out of 551 participants, 141 strongly agree; 246 stated that they agree with this statement; 117 mildly agree; 30 participants neither agree nor disagree; 6 mildly disagree; 7 disagree; and 4 strongly disagree.

Figure 53: Quantitative survey (increased word-of-mouth)



4.8.1 Quantitative data analysis

This section begins with the demographic analysis of the quantitative findings followed by confirmatory factor analysis and concludes with hypothesis testing and presenting best model fit for the five hypotheses developed in this study.

4.8.2 Demographic features of participants

The data shows that most of the respondents were male, 55.2 % (n=304), whereas 44.8 % were female (n=247). Most of them, 49.9% (n=551), were in the 18 to 30 age range, lived in United Kingdom 98.9% (n=551), and were White British, 56.3% (n=551). Most of the participants had attained some university level education, 77.9% (n=551) of them had used Facebook for 6 to 10 years, and 76.20% (n=551) followed technology brand communities. 791 respondents participated in the survey and, after sorting out the incomplete responses, 551 complete responses were selected for further analysis. Among the 551, 52.2 % (n=551) were male and 44.8 % (n=551) were female. Among the 551, 49.2 % (n=275) were aged between 18 and 30, 28.3 % (n=156) were in the 31 to 40 age group, 18.9 % (n=104) were in the 41 to 50 age group, and 2.9 % (n=16) were in the 51 and above age group.

The educational background of the participants was as follows: 33.9% (n=187) had with some college experience but no degree; 34.2% (n=189) had a bachelor's degree, 22.7% (n=125) had a masters or doctoral degree; 6% (n=33) had some high school experience, and 3.1% (n=17) selected the "Prefer not to say" option. Most of the participants were White British, 56.3 % (n=310) and Asian, 27.2% (n=152), followed by African, 7.2% (n=41). 100 % (n=551) of the participants were resident in the United Kingdom.

As far as the participants' Facebook activities are concerned, most of the participants—80.9 % (n=446)—spent their time reading, liking, and commenting on posts and chatting with friends, family members, close groups, communities, and brands, etc. 84.8% (n=476) spent their time sharing messages, profile information, pictures, and videos with friends, groups, communities, etc.

49.2% (n=271) spent their time seeking information, endorsing brands, and sharing experiences with friends, groups, communities, brands, etc. 41.4% (n=137) spent their time actively referring product(s) to friends, groups, and communities and helping them to use these products. 27.2% (n=150) spent their time occasionally reading, liking, or commenting on Facebook activities with friends, groups, communities, and brands etc. 3.1% (n=17) spent their time playing online games and engaging in other activities (e.g., Farmville, Mafia Wars), followed by some time spent reading magazines and scrolling in Messenger.

Most of the participants—39% (n=215)—spent 11 hours and more on Facebook; 30.7 % (n=169) spent 6 to 10 hours on Facebook; 20.3% (n=112) spent 3 to 5 hours on Facebook; and 9.6 % (n=53) spent 0 to 2 hours on Facebook every week. In terms of the brand community they follow on Facebook, the types of brand communities that participants follow on Facebook are: Apparel 37.6% (n=207); automobiles 27.8% (n=153); technology 76.2% (n=420); food and beverages 70.1% (n=386); and entertainment 62.6% (n=345). Very insignificant other categories of brand community, such as online games and magazines and newspapers, could be selected using multiple answers. The weekly time spent on the brand communities that participants follow on Facebook is as follows: 27.8% (n=153) spent 6 to 10 hours; 24.9% (n=137) spent 3 to 5 hours; 14.3% (n=79) spent 1 to 2 hours; 14.0% (n=77) spent less than an hour; and 13.2% (n=73) rarely spent time on Facebook. Participants' years of experience with the brand community are as follows: 55.4% (n=305) had 3 to 5 years of experience with the brand community they follow; 33.9% (n=187) had 0 to 2 years; 10 % (n=55) had 6 to 10 years; and .07 % (n=4) had 11 years' experience or more.

As this survey was designed to collect responses from those who have a Facebook account and are involved in activities on Facebook, all the respondents must have a Facebook account to qualify to complete the questionnaire. The data shows that, among the 551 total respondents, Facebook is the most popular social network worldwide. It has a global usage penetration of 22.9%, whereas its percentage is very high in UK: there were around 44 million Facebook users as of July 2017, which is the 11th highest number of users in the world (Statista, 2017). Facebook had 1.32 billion daily active users on average in June 2017 and 2.01 billion monthly active users as of June 30, 2017 (Facebook, 2017).

The largest number of respondents fell into the 25 to 35 years old category of the UK population, which is very active in social media. The highest number of Facebook users in the United Kingdom

was found to be among those aged between 25 and 34 years old, of which 5.2 million were women and 5.5 million were men in January 2017: the older an age group becomes, the lower the user numbers become (Statista, 2017). The age distribution of Facebook users in the United Kingdom between May 2013 and February 2017 suggests that 21% of Facebook users in April 2015 were aged 25 to 34. A recent survey carried out in February 2017 suggests that 19% of responding Facebook users were aged between 15 and 24 years old and that the number of respondents aged 25 to 34 years of age was 23 percent, which is a 2% increase between May 2013 and January 2017. As the younger UK population is very active on social media and the 18 to 30 age group had the highest response rates in the survey. As the age group became older, the number of respondents went down too, which matches the data trends as well.

The worldwide distribution of active Facebook users as of July 2017 suggests that 56% of active users are men in the 13 to 65 and above age group, while 46% are women in the same age group. There is a huge gap in the 18 to 35 age group: 12% of active Facebook users globally were women between the ages of 18 and 24, while the figure was 18% for men in the same age group. Moreover, 12% of active users globally were women between the ages of 25 and 35, whereas the figure was 17% for men in the same group. This suggests the fact that the male population within the 18 to 35 age group is more active on Facebook than the female population.

The data shows that respondents were both male (n=304) and female (n=247). The data also indicates that many respondents fell into the 25 to 34 age group, while there are more male Facebook users than female users in the UK. Facebook is the leading social network and had over 44 million monthly users in the UK alone in 2017. Facebook's demographics in the UK are very much even, with 49% male users and 51% female users. 60% of the UK population has a Facebook account and the highest number of users are in the 13 to 34 years of age group (thinkdigitalfirst, 2017).

According to the Office for National Statistics, there are 64.6 million people living in the UK. The distribution of their ethnicity shows that 87.2% are white British, that Asian (e.g., Pakistani, Indian, Bangladeshi and other) groups make up almost 7% percent of the population, and that Black groups account for almost 4% (IRR, 2017). The UK population is diverse in nature, which the responses to the survey show. Most respondents stated that they were either White British (396) or Asian (236). The other respondents were African (47) and Asian British (27), while the other minority

responses were Australian (4), Caucasian (5), American (10) African British (3), and European (6).

In the USA, where more Americans have adopted social media, social media's user base has grown to be more representative of the broader population. Young adults were among the earliest social media adopters and they continue to use these sites in higher levels; however, usage by older adults has increased in recent years. As of 2016, 59% percent of adults with high school or fewer educational qualifications use at least one of the social media platforms, whereas 73% of adults with some college experience use one of the social media platforms, and 78% of college graduates use one of the social media platforms (Pew Research Centre, 2016).

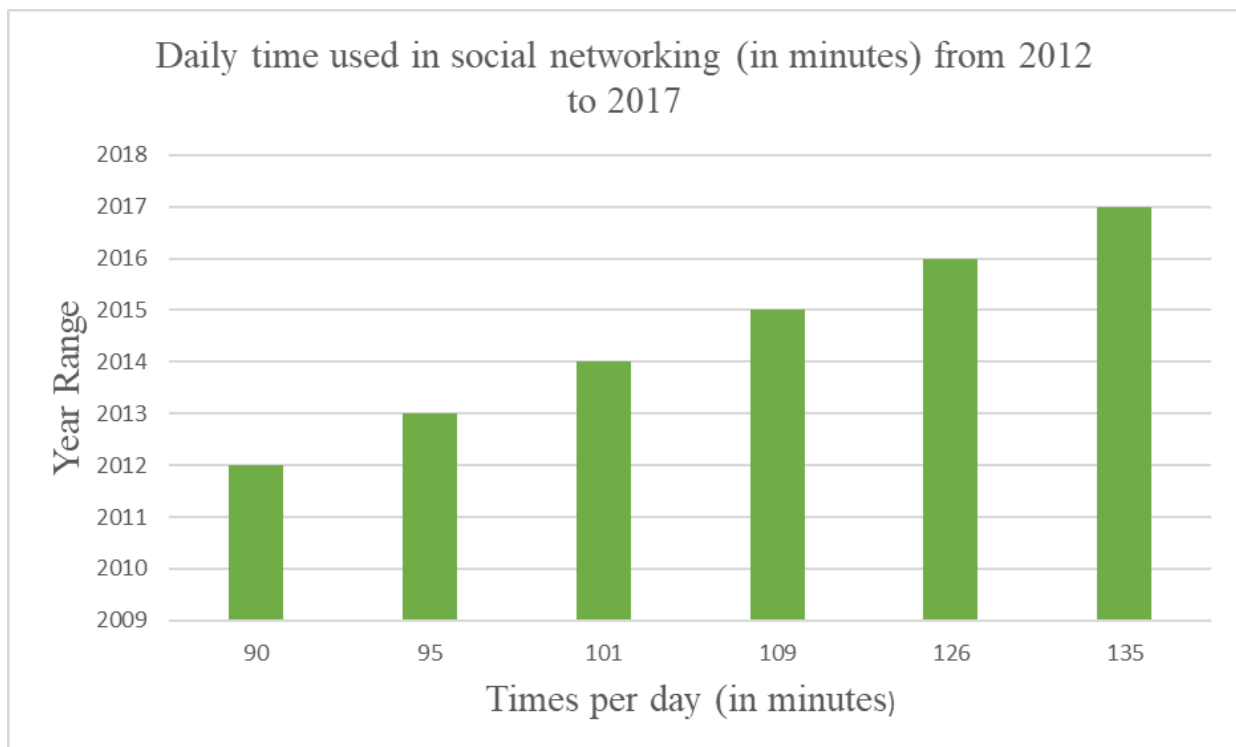
Out of the 551 participants who responded to the questionnaire, 55 had some high school experience but no diploma; 250 had some college experience but no degree; 253 had a bachelor's degree; 152 had a masters or doctoral degree; and 28 preferred not to say. There is strong relationship between those who have some college experience but no degree and those who have a bachelor's degree, as their response levels are high. This also indicates that this group is active on social media, and especially Facebook. Facebook's growth in the last few decades has been tremendous, particularly in the developing world. The use of mobile apps, such as Android, smartphones, the popularity of the iPhone, and high-bandwidth connections are some of the reasons for this. Facebook has added 744 million users in Asia and the rest of the world since hitting 1 billion total users. It has also added 41 million users in the US and Canada. The rapid increase in Facebook growth started after 2010 and people are using it more and more (techcrunch2017). In fact, 66% of Facebook's monthly users visit the site each day, compared with 55% when it hit 1 billion. Our data shows that, out of 735 total responses, the largest proportion have used Facebook for between 6 and 10 years (498); 177 have used Facebook for between 3 and 5 years; 46 have used Facebook for between 0 and 2 years; and 14 have used Facebook for 11 years or more.

Studies shows that users spend six days a week and an average of 2.6 hours per day on Facebook (Lilley, Grodzinsky, & Gumbus, 2012). Facebook has announced that, globally, people spend more than 50 minutes a day across Facebook's suite of apps (not including WhatsApp).

Facebook has registered 894 million monthly active users who checked the site only using their smartphones.

Brits spend almost an entire day of the week online watching Netflix and scrolling through Facebook, a study has found. We spend a whopping 21 hours browsing the net each week, with over six of these hours being spent solely on using social networking sites like Facebook. Experts say that this is due to a fear of missing out on what friends and colleagues are getting up to and they identify the fact that users tend to check these sites before they go to bed. The findings collected by Gadget Insurance Provider (www.row.co.uk) found that UK visitors to Facebook spent 850 million hours last March using its services. Of the UK's 32 million Facebook users, that works out to a massive 26.5 hours per visitor every month (Webb, 2016).

Figure 54: Global social network use per day in minutes from 2012 -2017



Source: Statista, 2017

The data shows that 236 participants use Facebook more than 11 hours per week; 199 participants use Facebook for 6 to 10 hours a day; 187 participants use Facebook for 3 to 5 hours a day; and 113 participants use Facebook for 0 to 2 hours per week. The highest number of participants use Facebook for a long time, as other data suggests. Close to 90% of users on Facebook say that they follow at least one brand community on Facebook, according to a survey by Lab42 (2016). Additionally, 50% say that they find brands' Facebook pages more useful than company websites. Among the Facebook users who follow brand communities, 82% said that Facebook is a good place to interact with brands, 75% said that they felt more connected to the brand communities on Facebook, and 69% said that they followed a brand community because a friend in their network did (Purely Branded, 2017)

4.8.3 Confirmatory factor analysis

Confirmatory factor analysis is used to test whether the measures of a construct are consistent with the researcher's understanding of the nature of that construct or factor. The objective of confirmatory factor analysis is to test whether the data fits a hypothesized measurement model. The hypothesized model is based on theory and previous analytic resources.

Factor loading

The first step before testing the hypotheses in SPSS using Amos 25.0 is testing the reliability and the validity of the variables through confirmatory factory analysis. As there are four main constructs and multiple variables to measure these constructs, factor loading was conducted to test whether the model fits.

Participation

The participation variable has six items from the available scale in participation research. The items of participation emphasize different aspects of consumers' behaviours, such as reading comments, playing games, responding to comments, etc., in the brand community they follow on Facebook. In addition, some items that have low factor loadings were removed following expert suggestion and in accordance with research guidelines. The item with a low factor loading that was removed is: "I have watched videos in the brand community I follow on Facebook." Confirmatory factor analysis loadings of the participation variables range from 0.67 to 0.74 and the composite reliability value for the factor is 0.81, whereas average variance extracted (AVE) is

0.62 and Cronbach's alpha value is 0.79 for the participation variables. The accepted reliability test value is > 0.70 , which is above the guideline. After running factor analysis in Amos, variables that had weaker factor loadings were deleted. The factors loading at less than 0.4 were removed.

Engagement

The engagement variable has seven items from the available scale in engagement literature. Some items that had low factor loadings were removed following expert suggestion and in accordance with research guidelines. The item with low factor loading that was removed is: "Overall, my experiences with the brand community that I follow on Facebook are intense." Confirmatory factor loading for engagement ranges from 0.73 to 0.81 and the composite reliability value for the engagement variables is 0.83. The average value extracted was 0.59 and the Cronbach's alpha value is 0.84.

Loyalty

The loyalty variable has nine items from the available scale in loyalty literature. Confirmatory factor loadings for loyalty range from 0.66 to 0.82 and the composite reliability value for the factor is 0.86, whereas average value extracted is 0.63 and the Cronbach's alpha value is 0.85. Some items that had low factor loadings were removed following expert suggestion and in accordance with research guidelines. The items with low factor loadings that were removed are: "I prefer to use products/brands of the company whose brand community I follow on Facebook" and "I prefer to use products/brands of the company whose brand community I follow on Facebook."

Word-of-mouth

The word-of-mouth variable has five items from the available scale in word-of-mouth literature. The confirmatory factor loading for WoM ranges from 0.73 to 0.83, the composite reliability value of this factor is 0.86, the average variance extracted value is 0.63, and the Cronbach's alpha value is 0.78. The item with low factor loading that was removed is: "I have spoken favourably to others about the company/brand whose brand community I follow on Facebook."

The result for composite reliability is above 0.70 and average variance extracted is above 0.5, which is the standard value (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). The factor loading was run using Harman's single-factor test (Podsakoff et al., 2003), which is commonly used for checking biases. The fit indices and item loadings for all the factors range above 0.70, which suggests that convergent validity is acceptable for the different factors used in the measurement model. For discriminant validity, which is calculated following the AVE results, the values are above 0.59,

whereas the square root of AVE value is greater than the correlation of the other variables, thus giving discriminant validity.

Results of factor loading

As there are four main constructs and multiple variables by which to measure these constructs, factor loading was conducted to test whether the model fits. The factor loadings range from 0.3 to 0.82 and those with values lower than 0.5 were removed from the study.

Table 10: Results of factor loading

Factor loading result							
	Construct	Items	Factor loading	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability		AVE
	Participation			0.79	0.81		0.62
	I have read fan comments posted in the brand community I follow on Facebook	Part 1	0.71	—	—	—	—
	I have responded to fan comments posted in the brand community I follow on Facebook	Part2	0.67	—	—	—	—
	I have watched videos posted in the brand community I follow on Facebook	Part3	0.39	—	—	—	—
	I have posted comments in the brand community I follow on Facebook	Part4	0.73	—	—	—	—
	I have played games or been involved in other activities in the	Part5	0.74	—	—	—	—

brand community I follow on Facebook						
Being part of the brand community I follow on Facebook has increased my level of participation with the brand	Part6	0.76				
Engagement			0.84	0.83	—	0.59
Anything related to the brand community grabs my attention on Facebook	Eng1	0.32	—	—	—	—
I like to learn more about the brand community on Facebook	Eng2	0.81	—	—	—	—
I pay a lot of attention to anything about the brand community on Facebook	Eng3	0.76	—	—	—	—
I spend a lot of discretionary time in the brand community on Facebook	Eng4	0.73	—	—	—	—
I am passionate about the brand community on Facebook	Eng5	0.77	—	—	—	—
Overall, my experiences with the brand community that I follow on Facebook are intense	Eng6	0.81				
Being part of the brand community, I follow on	Eng7	0.75				

Facebook has increased my level of engagement with the brand							
Loyalty			0.85	0.86			0.63
The products/brands of the company whose brand community I follow on Facebook are my first choice	Loyl1	0.66	—	—	—	—	—
I prefer to use the products/brands of the company whose brand community I follow on Facebook	Loyl2	0.35	—	—	—	—	—
I think the brand community I follow on Facebook has the best offers in the present	Loyl3	0.38	—	—	—	—	—
I prefer to buy products/brands from the company whose brand community I follow on Facebook instead of other brand communities	Loyl4	0.79	—	—	—	—	—
I hold the company whose brand community I follow on Facebook in high regard	Loyl5	0.78	—	—	—	—	—
I would buy products/brands from the company whose brand	Loyl6	0.82	—	—	—	—	—

community I follow on Facebook in the future						
In the future, I will actively seek out products/brands from the company whose brand community I follow on Facebook	Loyl7	0.67				
I will purchase products/brands from the company whose brand community I follow on Facebook the next time I need a product it offers	Loyl8	0.71				
Being part of the brand community I follow on Facebook has increased my level of loyalty towards the brand	Loyl9	0.62				
WoM			0.78	0.84		0.64
I am proud to say to others that I am a customer of the company/brand whose brand community I follow on Facebook	WOM1	0.83	—	—	—	—
I strongly recommend buying products from the company/brand whose brand community I follow on Facebook	WOM2	0.79	—	—	—	—

I mostly say positive things about the company/brand whose brand community I follow on Facebook	WOM3	0.67	—	—	—	—
I have spoken favourably to others about the company/brand whose brand community I follow on Facebook	WOM4	0.73	—	—	—	—
Being part of the brand community I follow on Facebook has increased my level of word-of-mouth activities about the brand	WOM5	0.78				

Final factor loading

The final factor loading, where values were less than 0.5 for the dependent variables, led to certain variables being removed from the study, as is shown in the figure below.

Table 11: Result of factor loading for the four constructs

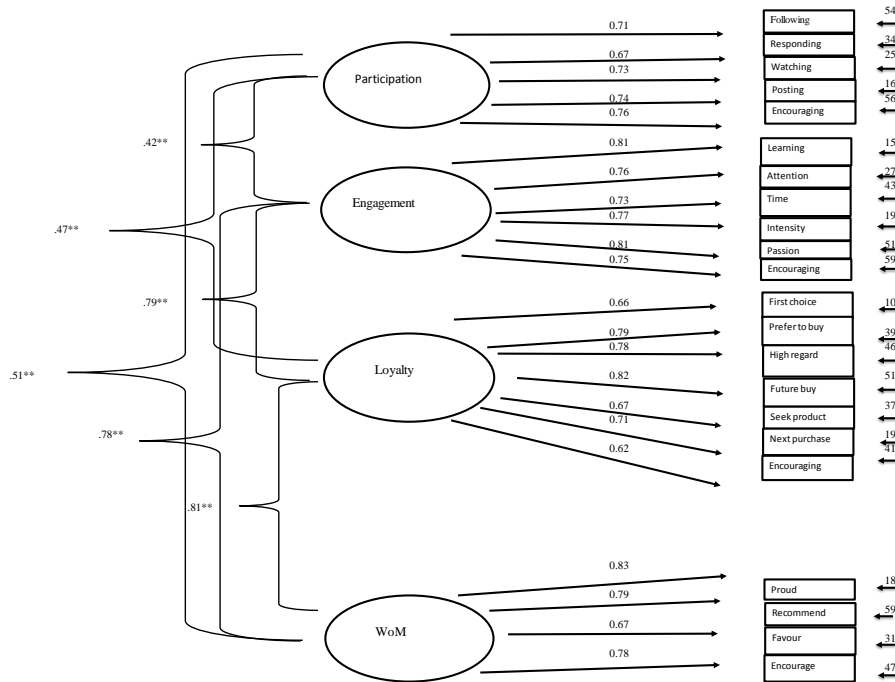
Factor loading result					
Construct	Items	Factor loading	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	AVE
Participation			0.79	0.81	0.62
	Part1	0.71	—	—	—
	Part2	0.67	—	—	—

Engagement	Part3	0.69	—	—	—	—
	Part4	0.73	—	—	—	—
	Part5	0.74	—	—	—	—
			0.84	0.83	—	0.59
	Eng1	0.79	—	—	—	—
Loyalty	Eng2	0.81	—	—	—	—
	Eng3	0.76	—	—	—	—
	Eng4	0.73	—	—	—	—
	Eng5	0.77	—	—	—	—
			0.85	0.86		0.63
WoM	Loy1	0.66	—	—	—	—
	Loyl2	0.79	—	—	—	—
	Loyl3	0.81	—	—	—	—
	Loyl4	0.82	—	—	—	—
	Loyl5	0.67	—	—	—	—
	Loyl6	0.62	—	—	—	—
	Loyl7	0.61	—	—	—	—
			0.78	0.84		0.64
	WOM1	0.83	—	—	—	—
	WOM2	0.79	—	—	—	—
	WOM3	0.73	—	—	—	—
	WOM4	0.78	—	—	—	—

Correlations among the latent variables

The quantitative findings suggest that there is a higher positive relationship between engagement and loyalty and word-of-mouth (see Table 20). The correlation among the latent variables shows that the direct relation between participation and loyalty and word-of-mouth without engagement mediation is lower than the indirect relationship between participation and loyalty and world of mouth, where engagement mediation is higher.

Table 12: Correlations among the latent variables



Correlation values for the constructs ranging from 0.42* to 0.73**

4.8.4 Result of the Structural Equation Model

Hypothesis Testing

The results of the confirmatory factor analysis indicate that the measurement model for the entire sample (as shown in Figure 3) was a good fit for the data: Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = .079; Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) = .071; Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI) = .97; Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = .86; and Parsimony Normed Fit Index (PNFI) = .83). Additionally, the normed chi-square was computed ($\chi^2/df = 2.16$), which

minimizes the impact of sample size on the Model Chi Square (Wheaton, Muthen, Alwin, & Summers, 1977), and was deemed to be at an acceptable ratio at 2.16 because it was higher than the recommended 2.0 ratio (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).

RMSEA shows how well the model fits the populations' covariance matrix (Byrne, 1998). The index is considered "one of the most informative fit indices to consult due to its sensitivity to the number of estimated parameters in the model" (Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2000, p. 85). According to MacCallum, Browne, and Sugaware (1996) and Steiger (2007), a RMSEA below .08 shows a good fit, which the measurement model in this study does. The SRMR is the "square root of the difference between the residuals of the sample covariance matrix and the hypothesized covariance model" (Hooper, Coghlan, & Mullen, 2008, p. 54). Hu and Bentler (1999) deem that levels of .08 or lower are acceptable, which the measurement model's SRMR level of .07 is. The NNFI, compares the χ^2 value of the model to the χ^2 of the null model (Hooper et al., 2008), and the CFI compares the sample covariance matrix with the null model (Hooper et al., 2008). The measurement model values of .97 exceed the suggested thresholds of .95 for both indices (Bentler, 1990; Hu & Bentler, 1999). Lastly, the PNIF index, which adjusts for sample size, has yet to be assigned a threshold value.

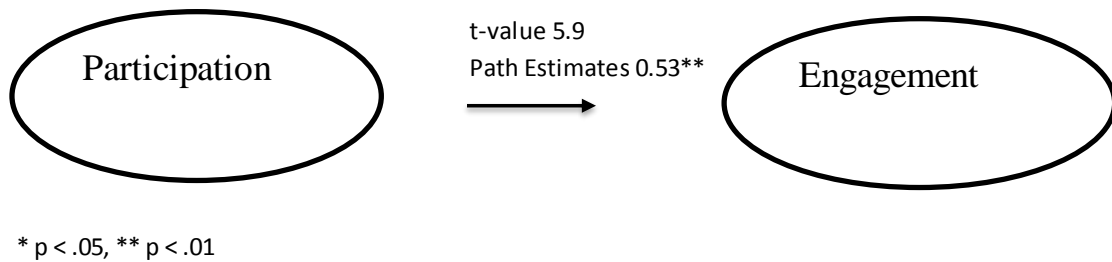
The results from the structural analysis, where the relationship between the constructs is tested with the value of the path coefficients and the t value, are as follows. First, the model fit for the relationship between participation, engagement, loyalty, and word-of-mouth was run, which presents a good fit on all indices, as $\text{CMIN}\chi^2=461.63$, $p<.05$, $df=123$, $\text{TLI}=0.91$, $\text{CFI}=0.93$, and $\text{RMSEA}=0.068$.

Second, the model fit for the relationship between participation and loyalty and word-of-mouth was run which produced a good model fit ($\text{CMIN}\chi^2=549.48$, $p<.05$, $df=136$, $\text{TLI}=0.870$, $\text{CFI}=0.86$, and $\text{RMSEA}=0.079$); however, the second model fit has poorer relationship results than the first. Therefore, it suggests that the models of engagement mediation between participation and loyalty and word-of-mouth fit better. The model fit gives the strongest hint that participation and its relationship with loyalty and word-of-mouth is weaker when there is no engagement involved.

The study has five hypotheses and all of them are supported. These are discussed below.

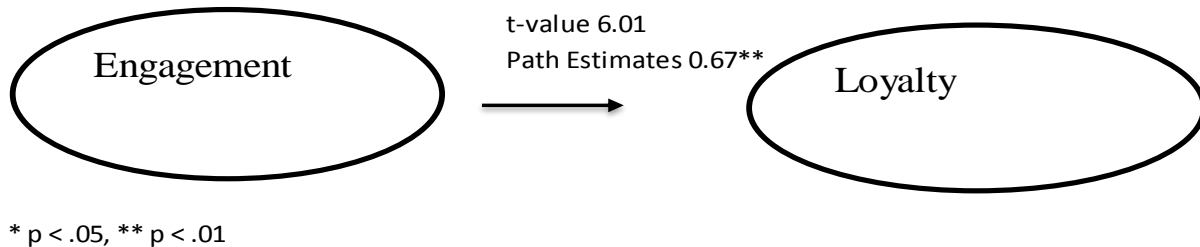
Hypothesis 1 predicted that there is a positive relationship between a consumers' participation with brand communities on Facebook and that this encourages engagement, which exists. As hypothesized, participation has a positive relationship with engagement (Path Estimates 0.53, t-value 5.9, $p < .05$). Based on this, Hypothesis 1 was supported.

Figure 55: Hypothesis testing (H1)



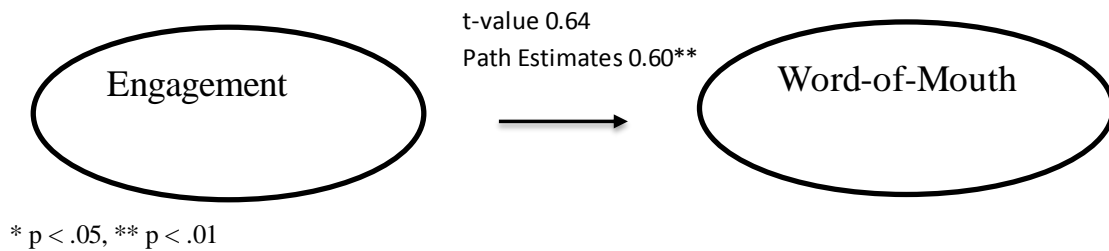
Hypothesis 2 predicted that there is a positive relationship between consumers' engagement with a brand community on Facebook and that this encourages loyalty, which exists. As hypothesized, engagement has a positive relationship with loyalty (Path Estimates 0.67, t-value 6.01, $p < .05$). Based on this, Hypothesis 2 was supported.

Figure 56: Hypothesis Testing (H2)



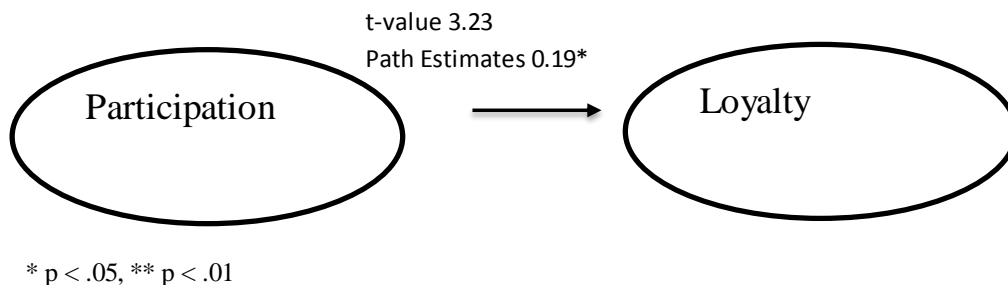
Hypothesis 3 predicted that there is a positive relationship between consumers' engagement with brand communities on Facebook and that this encourages word-of-mouth, which exists. As hypothesized, engagement has a positive relationship with word-of-mouth (Path Estimates 0.64, t-value 7.12, $p < .05$). Based on this, Hypothesis 3 was supported.

Figure 57: Hypothesis Testing (H3)



Hypothesis 4 predicted that there is a positive relationship between consumers' participation with brand communities on Facebook and that this encourages loyalty, which exists. As hypothesized, participation has a positive relationship with loyalty (Path Estimates 0.19, t-value 3.23, $p < .05$). Based on this, Hypothesis 4 was supported.

Figure 58: Hypothesis Testing (H4)



Hypothesis 5 predicted that there is a positive relationship between consumers' participation with brand communities on Facebook and that this encourages word-of-mouth, which exists. As hypothesized, participation has a positive relationship with word-of-mouth (Path Estimates 0.18, t-value 4.15, $p < .05$). Based on this, Hypothesis 5 was supported.

Figure 59: Hypothesis Testing (H5)

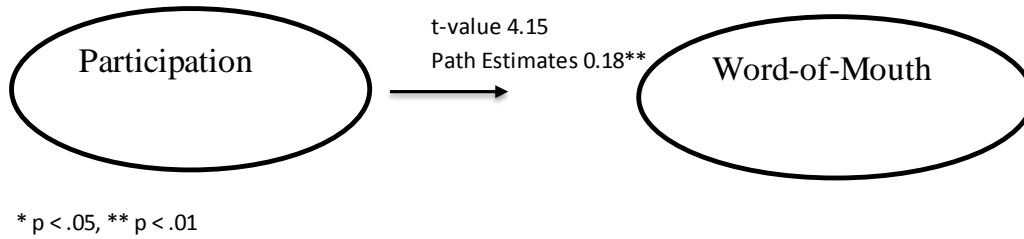
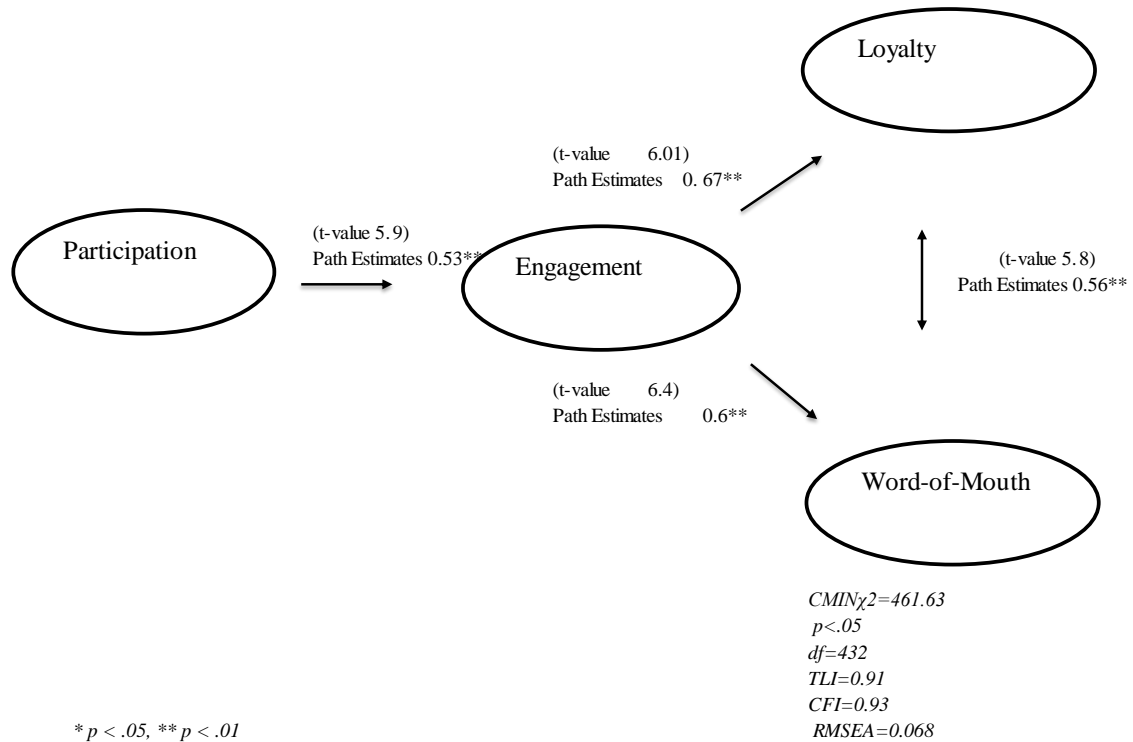


Table 13: Hypothesis Testing (H1, H2, H3, H4 and H5)

Hypothesis				Path Estimates	t value	Test results
H1	Participation	with	engagement	0.53	5.9	Supported
H2	Engagement	with	loyalty	0.67	6.01	Supported
H3	Engagement	with	WoM	0.64	7.12	Supported
H4	Participation	with	loyalty	0.19	3.23	Supported
H5	Participation	with	WoM	0.18	4.15	Supported

First, the model fit for the relationship between participation, engagement, loyalty, and word-of-mouth was run, which presents a good fit on all indices, as $CMIN\chi^2=461.63$, $p<.05$, $df=432$, $TLI=0.91$, $CFI=0.93$, and $RMSEA=0.068$.

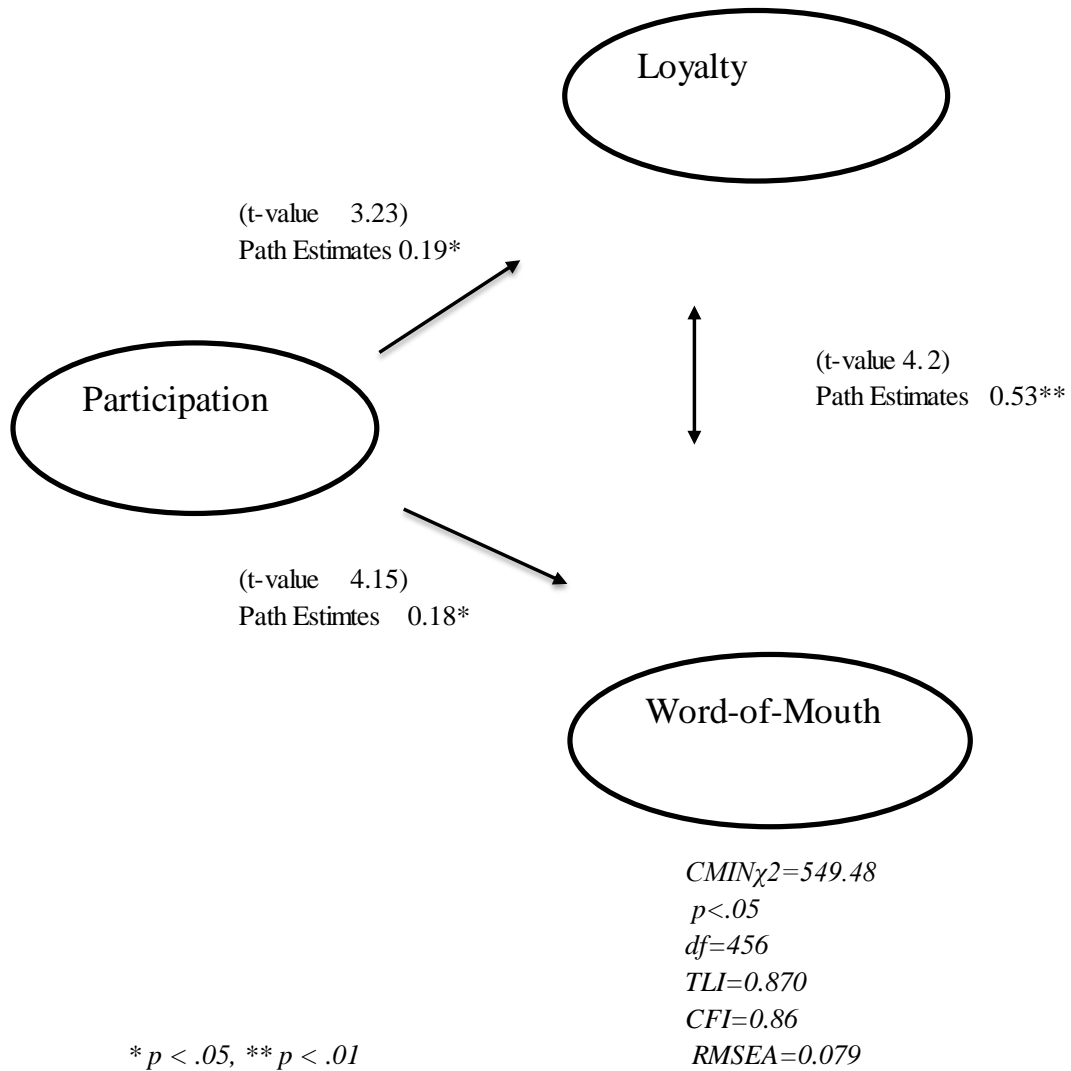
Figure 60: Engagement mediated relationship (model test).



Research Model (standardized coefficient and t-values in brackets)

Second, the model fit for the relationship between participation and loyalty and word-of-mouth was run, which produced a good model fit ($CMIN\chi^2=549.48$, $p<.05$, $df=456$, $TLI=0.870$, $CFI=0.86$, and $RMSEA=0.079$); however, the second model fit has a poorer relationship result than the first one.

Figure 61: Participation without engagement mediation (model test).



Research Model (standardized coefficients, t-values in brackets)

4.9.1 Limitations of the quantitative study

The first weakness of the quantitative study is related to sample size. This is because of missing values in the quantitate study and the quality of the data especially. This is because online

questionnaires are not considered to provide rich data. Sample size can weaken the reliability of statistical tests and can influence the underlying assumptions. The researcher is conscious of this fact and, therefore, the choice of sample was 551 completed questionnaires, which is more than double the general recommendation for SEM analysis. Secondly, the dependent variables used in the constructed models many not necessarily provide the values for the relationships. However, the researcher conducted confirmatory factor analysis, which allowed him to test the values and carry out an analysis accordingly.

Thirdly, the choice of independent variables determines the value of relationships. There may be a problem with such independent variables because of sample size, which may not have captured the research purpose. This researcher has tested the relationships among the variables and has chosen the variables with the most significant correlations among them.

4.10.1 Summary

This chapter has focused on the processes of data collection, findings, and analysis. In the first section, the sampling method and population were discussed. The online survey tool, Survey Monkey, was used to collect online survey questionnaires on Facebook among participants in the UK using the snowball technique. In the second section, the data findings (collected from the online questionnaire through Survey Monkey and recorded in SPSS) were presented along with tables and figures. In the third and final section, the five hypotheses generated in the study via the literature review were tested using the statistical techniques of structural equation modelling and confirmatory factory factor analysis in AMOS 25. It was found that all five hypotheses were supported by the findings tested through structural equation modelling; also, the direct and indirect engagement model fit tested by engagement mediated model found better fit.

Overall, this chapter has provided a detailed description regarding sample selection, data sources, data findings, and hypothesis testing. The next chapter will discuss the qualitative data collection process and examine the findings and analysis.

Chapter 5

Qualitative Data Collection, Findings, and Analysis

5.1.1 Introduction

This chapter gives an account of the qualitative data collection, findings, and analysis. The subjects of the qualitative study are the fans of Apple products in user generated brand communities on Facebook. The study of these fans in user generated brand communities on Facebook can offer broader insights into, and understanding of, the engagement construct, which may fill the knowledge gap in the extant literature, as discussed in Chapter 2 (Literature Review). This study uses Apple fans in the user generated online brand community on Facebook. Those who met the criteria of being engaged with the community through their interactions, information-sharing, and involvement with the community were the targets of the interview. One of the problems the researcher faced in getting access to the target participants with whom to conduct interviews was establishing personal contact. Finally, six interviewees from the user generated Apple brand community on Facebook, which has almost 1 million users, were interviewed face-to-face and over the phone. The audio was recorded for further data analysis after permission was granted from the participants.

The questions for the interview were designed to be semi-structured, raw data was collected from the interview in the form of transcripts, and notes were manually translated following thematic analysis techniques following guidance provided by the research of Braun and Clarke (2006). They define thematic analysis as being a method used for “identifying, analysing and reporting themes within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The process of data analysis took place in six stages: familiarization, generalization of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report.

5.1.2 Sampling

Qualitative study normally uses non-probability samples because the focus for choosing respondents lies in the characteristics that they exhibit, in terms of providing significant data, rather than the chances of their selection, which is instrumental in achieving the main aims and objectives of research. Patton (2002) argues that, “Studying information-rich cases yields insights and in-depth understanding rather than empirical generalizations.” Researchers of qualitative studies have come up with different approaches towards sampling methods. Marshall (1996) suggests three categories of sampling methods: convenience sampling, judgement (i.e., purposeful) sampling, and theoretical sampling. On the other hand, Patton (2002) recommends fifteen categories of samples, one which is convenience sampling. Similarly, Creswell (1998) accepts the fact that “the purposeful selection of participants represents a key decision point in a qualitative study” and suggests the need for a better understanding of purposive sampling. In addition, Creswell et al., (2008) suggest that sampling in qualitative studies is generally purposeful where intentional sampling cases can help the researcher understand the phenomenon and the main aims better. They suggest study the use of quantitative and qualitative study methods to investigate the same phenomena, with purposive sampling being the last resort for the researcher.

This study uses purposive homogenous sampling of Apple brand champions in the user generated brand community on Facebook who have similar traits and characteristics in terms of their experience and behaviour with user generated brand communities on Facebook. The purposive (also called judgement) sampling technique is useful for the researcher when he/she makes a conscious selection of participants because of the specific qualities (e.g., knowledge and expertise) the participants exhibit. The selection of the participants in this study was carried out across the UK so that an in-depth understanding could be gained, while the similarity of the participants was used to explore their behaviour in the user generated online brand community. As a non-random technique, purposive sampling does not require any theories or categories of participants (Bernard, 2002): the researcher decides who he/she needs, based on the knowledge of the participants with the phenomena of interest and who can provide rich information for the researcher to study.

The six brand champions from the Apple user generated brand community on Facebook were interviewed. The criteria of being an Apple brand champion were set by the individuals’ involvement with the user generated brand community and the length of their brand community membership. Participants’ activities were defined by the engagement definitions i.e., their

affective, cognitive, and behavioural involvement in the user generated brand community's activities. The participants must have been a member of the community for at least 2 years. The criteria for their engagement were set according to their brand community activities, such as sharing, posting, taking part in discussions, and involvement in the brand communities' activities over the previous month. One hundred users with a high level of engagement in the brand community were chosen to take part in the interview process. The first 6 highly engaged Apple brand community champions were selected for an interview.

5.1.3 Designing interview guides

An interview guide is an important aspect of semi-structured interview as it acts as a pattern by which to make sure that all the sub categories of the research area are captured by the questions in order that more rigorous and in-depth data is collected (Arksey & Knight, 1999). In most of cases, the list of questions for the interview is designed with consideration of the comfort of the interviewees (Bryman, 2004) so that data extraction becomes easier for analysis. This research, as discussed before, has seven sub-research questions (see Appendix 3) that were to be addressed by the quantitative and qualitative study.

The aim of the research questions should be to encourage the participants to “reconstruct their experience and explore their meaning” (Seidman, 1998:76). Hence, the researcher should be allowed to change the sequence of the interview questions during an interview and the researcher should also revisit the previous interview, as well as the guides based on the previous interview experience. The researcher using the mixed research method must focus on the integration of both studies while developing the interview guide and must ask questions related to the research question in such a way as to avoid the researcher's subjective interests regarding the interviewee and so as not to limit their views.

Interviewee Profiles

Allan is a 26-year-old, UK-born male who lives in the UK with his single mother. He doesn't have a girlfriend. He works part-time for a private restaurant, mostly over the weekends, and takes a bus to his workplace, which is in the city. He uses his iPhone and iPad all the time when he is not at

work and rarely goes out with friends. He has his own world on social networking sites, mostly on Facebook and Twitter, and occasionally on other sites. He is a huge tech and Apple product fan and buys Apple every time he needs to upgrade or buy new product. He is also very active in online brand communities (e.g., Apple, Amazon, Nike, and many more), where he interacts, shares information, and provides feedback as well. He is always engaged with the online communities' experiences and interactions, and especially in the online Apple brand community.

Jimmie is a 24-year-old male from the UK. He did not go to college after school. However, he works from home for a private tech company with whom he has done some computing software courses. He is passionate about using tech products, such as laptops and phones—especially the iPhone. He knows both the hardware and software programs used in computers and phones. Being a tech person, he is internet savvy and loves to interact with other people on social media platforms. He is engaged with many different brand communities, but he is passionate about Apple products and, therefore, he shares any new information about Apple product uses and solutions to many technical problems with the brand community online, while also seeking out information from other community members. He is very familiar with Facebook and Snapchat and loves to remain online for a long time among other community members.

Hope is a 27-year-old female from the UK. She works for a private firm and lives with her friend in a rented flat. She is very active on social media, where she interacts with family, friends, and many brand communities. She loves shopping, making new friends, chatting, and sharing experiences with them through social media platforms. Apart from being active on social media, she is an ardent fan of Apple products and is an intense information seeker and sharer on social media platforms, especially among Apple brand community members. She says she does not have much have technical knowledge about Apple but has the passion to learn and share her knowledge with other users.

Jagan is a 34-year-old male from London, UK. He is self-employed and runs his own Nepalese news website, writes blogs for different daily newspapers in Nepal, and is a politician affiliated with one of the political parties in Nepal. He has a huge friend circle on Facebook, Twitter, and other social networking platforms. He loves social activities and anchors different Nepalese programmes, such as Everest Tourism Night, in the UK. Apart from being a social activist, he is a big fan of Steve Jobs and his innovations and he loves Apple products for their innovation and

technology. He spends most of his time on the internet and having conversations with other users regarding his own portal and other social activities. He interacts with brand community members of many brands online but he himself a huge fan of the Apple community, where he shares his experiences and difficulties regarding the uses of Apple products.

Yagya is 32-year-old male living in the UK. He has lived a large part of his life in India and moved to Nepal before settling in the UK. His family and friends are spread all over the world. Although his love for technology and the internet started when he was in India, as India was going through huge technological transformations, he could not fulfil his dreams in India, which he is doing now through using the internet and technological products of his choice. He participates in events organized by Apple as often as possible here in the UK and has been using a mobile phone ever since he came to UK. He even has planned to gift a new version of the iPhone to his wife soon. His involvement in social platforms results from the fact that his family is spread all over the world. Mostly, he spends time on Facebook, which has all the facilities of Skype and Viber combined and is the most used social media platform. His involvement does not end there. He is very active with the online brand communities of different brands as well. His activities with other brand communities are limited to him being a member only, whereas he is very much active and committed to the community activities of the Apple brand community. He has made many new friends through the Apple brand community and they share their experiences frequently through this community.

Ralph John is a 40-year-old male from in UK. In addition to being active on social media and among other users, he is an admirer, user, and advocate of Apple products and has followed innumerable numbers of brand communities on Facebook. However, his enthusiasm for Apple is above all others and it is seen through his involvement with the Apple brand community. Ralph John is a member of Facebook's Apple brand community. He is interested in iBook's, iCloud, iOS apps, iTunes, iPad, iPhone, and iPod, etc. He likes to collaborate and socialize among the community members and with the company as well. He connects with other members and shares ideas, asks for help, discusses posts and new products, and provides feedback. As a member of the Apple brand community, he gets information about upcoming events, such as conference calls and meet-ups. He uses the water cooler feature to discuss general interest topics.

Table 14: Interviewee profiles of the participants in this study

Name	Country of birth	Country of residence	Gender	Age group	Occupation	Language used in interview	Social media	Types of brand communities	Types of brands
Allan	UK	UK	Male	25-30	Employee	English	Facebook, Twitter	Apple, Amazon	Technology, retail, services
Jimmie	UK	UK	Male	20-25	Self-employed	English	Facebook, Snapchat	Apple, Starbucks	Technology, food and beverages
Hope	UK	UK	Female	22-27	Employee	English	Facebook, Instagram	Apple, Nike, The Body Shop	Technology, fashion
Jagan	Nepal	UK	Male	30-35	Self-employed	English	Facebook, Twitter	Apple, KLM	Technology, service, online retail
Yagya	Nepal	UK	Male	30-35	Employee	English	Facebook, Twitter	Apple, Samsung	Technology, entertainment
John	UK	UK	Male	35-40	Employee	English	Facebook, Twitter	Apple, Argos, eBay	Technology, retail

Source: Author's representation

5.1.4 Getting access to interviewees

Apple online brand champions on Facebook were the potential target participants for the in-depth interviews and the researcher began to try to establish contact. The researcher tried to establish a personal connection with the online brand champions, as their identity in most of the cases were unknown to him but he achieved very little success. However, he arranged for the interviews to take place between July 2016 and December 2016. The researcher faced problems in contacting the participants. All the contacts were made online and the researcher needed to establish mutual trust and mutual information-sharing. The researcher went through the following process to contact a suitable participant, collect information, and schedule an interview with them.

The first step was to identify the users' contact information. The second step was then to contact the targeted interviewees. The researcher looked for the users' contact information (e.g., mobile number or email address) on Facebook and on the brand community page. The next stage was to send a Facebook request directly and through mutual friends, and to send messages in posts tagged by their friends who happened to be the researcher's friends that explained the nature of researcher's background, his research project, the main interview questions, and the potential benefits of the research. Confidentiality was also guaranteed.

Several second reminder emails and messages did not even reach the brand community members, as they had already left the group or were not interested in being interviewed. Many community members did not respond to the first or second reminders, while some others were very busy with their own work. In order to arrange as many interviews as possible, each member was contacted three to five times by email, or a follow-up message was sent through the brand community page if they did not respond or if they did not directly refuse or offer to help. Once the targeted brand community members made positive commitments to the researcher's request, the subsequent step was to arrange interviews with them. A list of more detailed interview questions was sent to all the interviewees before each interview so that they could prepare for the interview in advance. As the area of study was particularly sensitive, it was important to reemphasize the guarantee of confidentiality to interviewees to encourage them to feel free to talk about their own views. Thus, the researcher confirmed that all the information gained from the interview would be only used for the research and that it would be kept confidential and anonymized. Only with the interviewee's agreement would the interview be audio-recorded to allow for effective transcription. There were four main questions, each related to one of the constructs under investigation. The first question was related to interviewee participation, the second was related to engagement and the third and fourth questions referred to loyalty and word-of-mouth respectively.

Table 16: Main interview questions

- Q1 How do you describe your journey with Apple and its online brand community?
 - a) Probing questions for participation:
 - i) How do they interact, share information, and involve themselves, etc., with Apple brand community members on Facebook?
- Q2 How do you feel about Apple products and its online brand community?
 - a) Probing questions for engagement:
 - i) Their passion, feelings, excitement, etc., for the Apple brand, as expressed in the Apple brand community.
- Q3 What is your past and present experience with Apple products and its community, and what will this be like in the future?

a) Probing questions for loyalty:

- i) Their past, present, and future motivations and their buying, searching, and user behaviour for Apple and the brand community's role in these behaviours.

Q4 How do you connect with Apple products and its online brand community?

a) Probing question for WoM:

- i) Their word-of-mouth behaviour (e.g., feedback, likes, comments, endorsements, and advocating) for Apple and the Apple brand community's role in such activities.

5.1.5 Conducting interviews

The qualitative study of this research used six semi-structured interviews with the Apple brand champions in Facebook. Three participants' interviews were conducted through face-to-face interviews, one via video calling in Facebook Messenger, and one on the phone. The duration of the interviews was fifteen to thirty minutes. The interviews took place with participants from around the UK (i.e., Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Liverpool, and London) and all the interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants. The researcher took notes during the interview, along with making voice and video recordings. It is important to consider taking notes in cases where no data was recorded, which is useful for creating follow up question.

Researchers must consider the prior knowledge of the interview participants and it is important for researchers to understand their situation and knowledge of the research order for interviews to be effective (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). In this research, the researcher gathered information about the Apple brand champions that would help to develop a connection and trust between the researcher and the interviewees (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). Similarly, it is important to have a connection with the participants, which will allow the interviewer to introduce the purpose of research. The researcher does not prioritize answers given by the participants either wrong and right. The participants are free to express their own opinions, feelings, and experiences, and it is this that the researcher is focused on (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, 2011).

5.1.6 Semi-structured questions

The interview questions were divided into main questions, follow up questions, and probing questions during the interview so that the main aim of the research could be answered in detail and to ensure that there was consistency all the interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, 2011). The questions were designed in such a way so that participants could share their experiences on the research topic without being forced to provide information (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, 2011). The interview guide was used flexibly, as the researcher had to decide the number and the sequence of the main questions he asked, depending on the duration of the interviews and the responses of the interviewees.

When using follow up questions, the researcher listens to what the participants answer and tries to explore useful information. Rubin and Rubin (2005, p. 136) discuss the importance of follow up questions in interviews, saying that, “follow-up questions are crucial for obtaining depth and detail, and can help in obtaining more nuanced answers.” The follow up questions used during interviews have significance and are asked in order to gain a broader understanding of the theme (Arksey & Knight, 1999; Bryman, 2004, 2015). However, follow up questions are formulated during the interview rather than being prepared before an interview. This is helpful in the sense that not all the questions are well-prepared and answered by the participants, and because such questions provide the researcher with a broader understanding.

On the other hand, probing questions provide information for the interviewer that addresses the main question. In this sense, probing questions allow the researcher to gain extra information that may be in the form of personal, descriptive information, and which may provide clear details relevant to the research topic (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, 2011). As soon as the researcher realized that a participant was talking about the significant elements in relation to the questions asked, there was an opportunity to ask such questions. For example, “Could you explain it with some examples?”, which encouraged the interviewee to provide detailed information. Sometimes, in response to this question, the participants paid attention to certain aspects, which the researcher could use to draw out further details about their participation behaviour.

Finally, the interviews with the Facebook online brand champions were expected to last from 15 to 30 minutes, depending on the nature of the conversation between the researcher and the participant. The researcher, even before participants agreed to take part in an interview, informed them that it might take 30 to 40 minutes. There were instances of interviews lasting for a long time, in which the researcher had to ask the participants to conclude the interview and in which participants became conscious of the time. At the end, the researcher double-checked with the participants if they wanted to say or add more to the conversation, or whether they wanted to suggest some thoughts on the research that might be useful. The researcher also asked whether he could contact the participants for future help in this research area, because the interviewees might be able to provide documents and further information.

5.2.1 Qualitative method of data analysis

The method of data analysis used is important because it is linked with what the researcher wants to know and, hence, selection of the right method by which to analyse data is crucial (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is discussed as being one of the most used approaches in qualitative data analysis (Bryman 2008, p.554). Thematic analysis provides a set of generic analysis skills that can be commonly shared among a variety of qualitative analysis methods (Holloway & Todres, 2003) and it is most appropriate for novice qualitative researchers as it does not require theoretical and technological knowledge of other analysis methods, such as grounded theory and discourse analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This research, as mentioned in the methodology section, adopts a case study interview method to collect data and uses thematic analysis technique to analyse the qualitative data. In addition, data analysis of the interviews is carried out following the data analysis process suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) and defined as comprising familiarization, searching themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, naming the themes, and producing the report.

As Braun and Clarke (2006) and Bryman (2008) describe, qualitative research uses various data analysis methods, which can establish patterns or themes from the data set (e.g., conversation analysis, interpretive phenomenological analysis, discourse analysis, narrative analysis, thematic analysis, or even grounded theory). Most of the methods mentioned above are connected to some

theoretical and epistemological heritage. For example, interpretive phenomenological analysis has an association with phenomenological epistemology, whereas the grounded theory approach is connected to the development of a theory. Unlike these methods, thematic analysis is not tied to any theoretical and epistemological heritage and is therefore independent from such theories. It is thus flexible in nature and “it can be applied across a range of theoretical and epistemological approaches” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.78). Likewise, Boyatzis (1998) believes it to be a technique that can be used for various methods rather than a distinct method.

Given the interpretation above and the researcher’s use of a pragmatic approach for this study, which is discussed in the methodology in Chapter 2, the researcher’s choice of thematic analysis is warranted for the data analysis method.

The thematic analysis method is chosen for this study because it is one of the most used techniques in qualitative studies to analyse a case study, especially interviews. There are several theories and process used in interpreting thematic analysis for interview data. This study chooses the thematic pattern suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), who define thematic analysis in qualitative studies and its use as “identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data.” They further argue that thematic choice is important because a “rigorous thematic approach can produce an insightful analysis that answers particular research questions” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.97).

Apart from the justification of thematic analysis, there two other reasons for using this method for analysing interview data. First, this approach is well-suited to the investigation of a data-oriented approach, as thematic analysis in this study facilitates the inductive method of data coding. Second, the main aim of the research was to investigate whether the data remains consistent with the main aim of the research and presents ample information. As the main research question is to analyse the influence of engagement on loyalty, participation, and word-of-mouth in user generated brand communities, data inductively collected from the interviews without being influenced by any preconceived theories helps maintain the consistency of the data in different situations. The use of thematic analysis is warranted for these reasons.

5.2.2 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis has been defined as being “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To be more specific, the following passage from Boyatzis (1998) defines thematic analysis in detail:

Thematic analysis is a process of encoding qualitative information. The encoding requires an explicit “code”. This may be a list of themes; a complex model with themes, indicators, and qualifications that are causally related; or something in between these two forms. A theme is a pattern found in the information that at the minimum describes and organizes possible observations or at the maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon. A theme may be identified at the manifest level (directly observable in the information) or at the latent level (underlying the phenomenon). The themes may be initially generated inductively from the raw information or generated deductively from theory and prior research.

The two above definitions try to justify thematic analysis in detail as being a process of coding qualitative information provided by participants that is then presented by the researcher through coding them and developing them into themes. Themes are identified in the data pattern from the information provided by the participants. In addition, themes may appear in two ways, which are known as the semantic level and latent label, as described by Braun and Clarke (2006). Finally, themes may be generated inductively from the raw data itself, or deductively, from theory or previous research.

This research uses the inductive approach and themes are generated from the raw data itself. One of the arguments for inductive reasoning is that the themes generated in the study will have a strong connection with the data, rather than the theory; in this sense, this approach shares similarities with grounded theory and IPA (Patton, 1990). However, grounded theory and IPA demand prior theoretical knowledge and justification, whereas thematic analysis is free from prior knowledge and theory criteria in the sense that the themes have very little connection with the specific research questions put forward to the participants. Moreover, the data is important for ensuring that the research is not influenced by the researcher’s theoretical interest in the research topic. Hence, the use of inductive analysis in the coding process without trying to fit any existing coding frames or the researcher’s prior assumptions. Having said that, it is not possible for the researcher to keep himself/herself aloof from theoretical and epistemological influences, as data cannot be coded outside epistemological understanding.

Semantic and latent themes

The thematic analysis in this study is conducted following two levels of coding processes (e.g., semantic and latent level), as suggested by Boyatzis (1998) and Braun and Clarke (2006). They describe the semantic level of theme identification as being a surface level of identifying the theme, whereas the latent level of theme refers to identifying the underlying meaning beyond what the data describes, while at the same time analysing and generating meaning from the data on the topic being investigated.

Generally, thematic analysis prioritizes only one level of themes as described by Braun and Clarke (2006, p.84): “a thematic analysis typically focuses exclusively or primarily on one level” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84). This study uses both the themes equally in each level, which demands a thorough reading of the interview transcripts and revisiting codes, types, and their themes. A simple technique is followed in MS Word 2016 by which to search for the themes by combining and grouping the code together. The four constructs; namely, engagement, participation, loyalty, and word-of-mouth, contained one main question, follow up, and probing question for each construct. The responses from the six Apple brand champions were categorized according to the answers for each construct in one group. In this sense, answers from the six participants on each construct were grouped into one category, and MS Word and Excel are instrumental to generating themes. Similar codes for one construct as discussed by all six respondents were grouped and regrouped into one category. Highlighters were used during reading and re-reading to identify and review themes. As suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), visual representation, known as mind maps or tables, were used to generate themes both in the latent and semantic themes. MS Word spreadsheets were used to create a table format for coding, which was presented using the mind map figure in MS Word.

Table 15: Phases of thematic analysis

<i>Phases of thematic analysis</i>	
Familiarization with the data	Transcribing data, reading and rereading, taking notes of initial ideas
Generating initial code	Coding interesting features of the data, collecting relevant data
Searching for the theme	Checking whether the themes work in relation to the coded extract, generating thematic map of the analysis
Reviewing themes	Checking themes and generating a thematic map

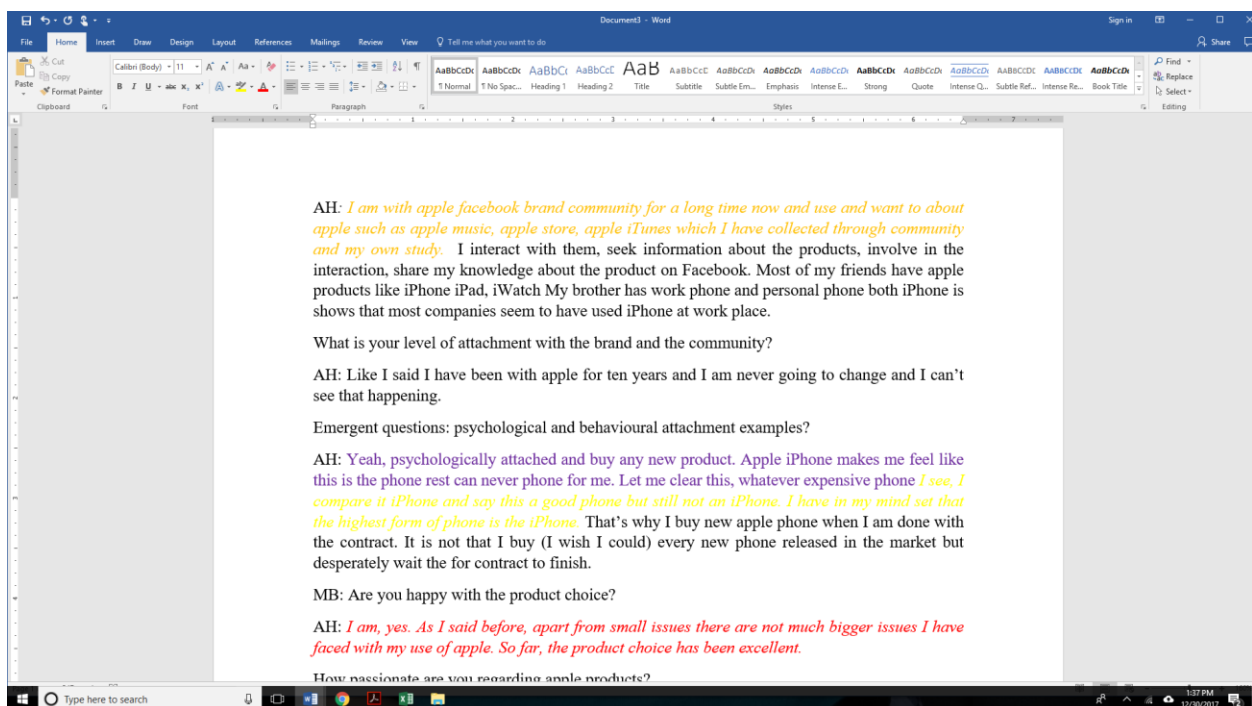
Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of the themes, generating definitions and names for each theme
Producing the report (writing up)	Final analysis, producing a report

Source: Braun & Clarke (2006)

5.2.3 Familiarization with the data

Familiarization is the first stage after data is collected. The researcher felt that it was important to complete the data familiarization stage right after the interviews, because he felt that the interviews were very recent and fresh in his mind. As this research used interview data, the familiarization with the data began with the researcher transcribing the interview data in MS Word. The interview transcripts and notes were read and reread to make sure that the researcher had not missed any data and to ensure that he knew the data well. In addition, the ideas directly identified at the manifest level (e.g., observed directly from the interview information) were highlighted to be coded and linked with the main constructs. The written records in MS Word served as a guiding principal and data source for the rest of the study, which the researcher could look at in any stage of the data analysis.

Figure 62: Qualitative data familiarization



Source: Author's representation

5.2.4 Generating initial codes from the data

Braun and Clarke (2006) describe coding as a data analytic process for capturing semantic and latent meaning, rather than being merely a data summary process. The process of coding begins with recording all the data items and finishes by combining all the data items into meaningful patterns. The qualitative study method requires data analysis to follow a certain pattern of data and the logic behind the existence of such patterns (Bernard, 2006). The first phase through which to find answers to these two questions is to begin with coding data. Saldaña (2009) defines coding as an analytical lens that the researcher wears while organizing data, which allows the researcher to perceive and interpret the data. In this study, coding was carried out by highlighting the sentences, words and phrases that have certain patterns.

Semantic and latent code

Thematic analysis in this study was conducted following two levels of coding processes (e.g., semantic and latent level) as suggested by Boyatzis (1998) and Braun & Clarke (2006). They describe the semantic level of code identification as a surface level of identifying the code of what participants have said and state that it is a visible and clear use of data, whereas latent code refers to identifying the underlying meaning beyond the data described at the same time as analysing and generating meaning from the data on the topic being investigated.

Table 16: Qualitative data coding table

*Qualitative study (individual coding table)/**Interview:1*

<i>Interviewee: 1</i>	<i>Initial coding</i>	<i>Semantic code</i>	<i>Latent code</i>
Question:1	<p><i>“Ten years ago, I took my first contract and decided apple was the one I want to go with it and I have never looked back”.</i></p> <p>“I have changed with every release but I have not changed from apple brand”.</p>	Positive and exciting experience Quality of brand and community and social Interaction	Participation Commitment
Question:2	Easier to use, simple apps, smooth touch screen, attractive shape and size, large online brand community, easy to interact, share information, seek information etc. with community online	Accessible community and quality of product	Functional benefit /social benefits
Question:3	<i>Wi-Fi stopped working, excellent product choice, very satisfied, many friends and community online, easier communication, internet messaging, face timing, large groups</i>		Functional benefits /social benefits
Question:4	I speak about it all the time on apple brand community on Facebook if someone is looking for a new phone or they have any problem, which I can help. In addition, I always recommend apple as a go to phone.	positive interaction, impartial suggestions, friendly	/symbolic functions / word of mouth /Engagement

Source: Author's representation

5.2.5 Searching for the themes

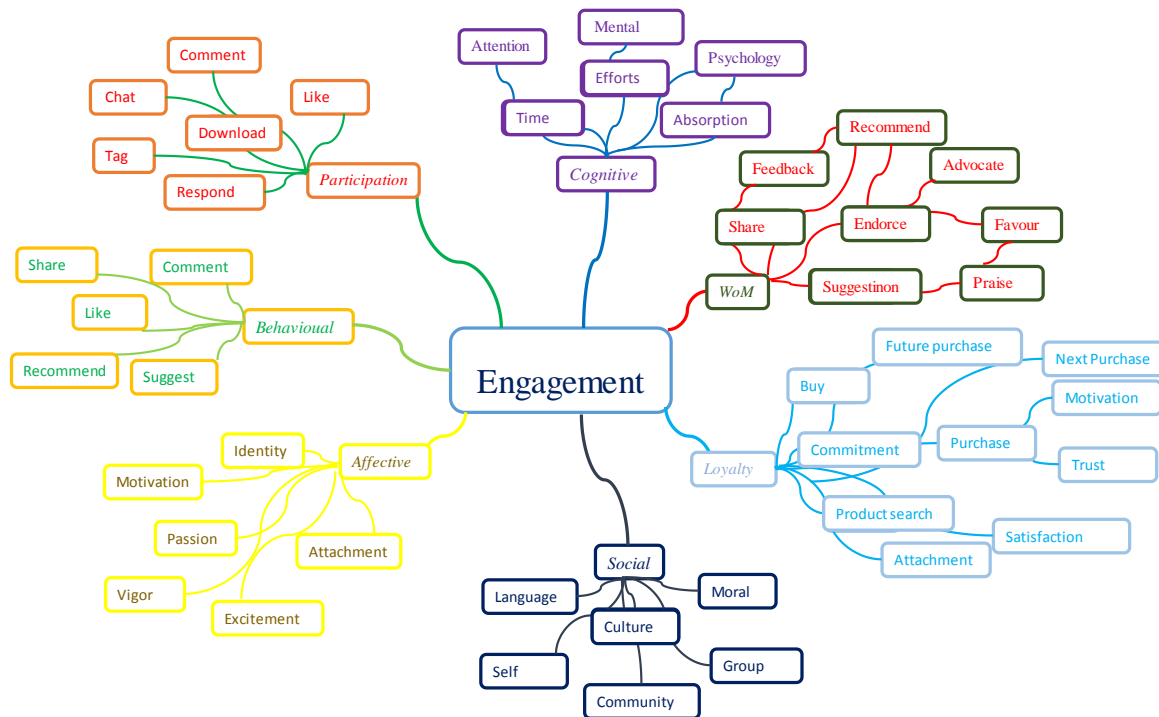
Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 82) describe searching for a theme as “something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set.” They have also addressed the issue of the how long or short a theme is appropriate. In qualitative research, there is no hard and fast rule as to how large or small a theme should be. There might be a bigger space for a them in some types of data, while there may be a very small space in others. This depends on what the researcher would like to adjust or what they

decide is necessary for the research. Hence, judgement is necessary to determine what a theme is, and researchers should capture something important in relation to the overall research question (Braun & Clarke 2006, p. 82).

Generally, thematic analysis prioritizes only one level of themes, as described by Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 84): “a thematic analysis typically focuses exclusively or primarily on one level” (Braun & Clarke 2006, p.84). This study uses both themes equally in each level, which demanded a through re-reading of the interview transcripts and revisiting codes, types, and their themes. A simple technique was followed in MS Word 2016 to search for the themes by combining and grouping the code together. The four constructs; namely, engagement, participation, loyalty, and word-of-mouth, contained one main question, follow up, and probing question for each construct. The responses from the six Apple brand champions were categorized according to the answers for each construct in one group. Thus, the answers provided by the six participants about each construct were grouped into one category, and MS Word and Excel became instrumental in the generation of themes. Similar codes for one construct, as discussed by all six respondents, were grouped and regrouped in one category. Highlighters were used during reading and re-reading to identify and review themes. As suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), visual representation, known as mind maps or tables, were used to generate themes both in the latent and semantic themes. MS Word spreadsheets were used to make create a table format for coding, which was presented using the mind map feature in MS Word.

Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that searching for themes starts when all the data has been initially coded. The process involves sorting and collating codes and their associated data in order to improve data visualization and to facilitate the identification of themes. In this study, the researcher employed mind mapping. This decision was influenced by Burgess-Allen and Owen-Smith (2010), who proposed the use of mind mapping techniques for rapid qualitative data analysis. In general, a mind map is “a diagram used to represent concepts, ideas, or tasks linked to and arranged radially [sic] around a central key word or idea. Primarily branches represent the major ideas or themes around the central topic, and secondary branches tend to include more concrete illustrative examples” (Burgess-Allen & Owen-Smith, 2010, p. 407).

Figure 63: Qualitative themes (mind mapping)



Source: Author's representation

5.2.6 Defining and naming themes

This study used mind maps to generate themes in the previous section. Mind maps define the themes as they generate a visual representation of the themes through visual patterns and categories, although the definitions of the themes go beyond visual representation and category generation.

This study analyses potential subthemes from the data set. In this study, the themes were gathered from the four main categories of investigation; namely, engagement, participation, loyalty, and word-of-mouth, which is a very broad subject area for the research and will therefore result in broader themes being identified. Moreover, the data within each theme was also analysed to examine the existence of potential sub-themes. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that sub-themes help to structure large and complex themes and to generate hierarchy of meaning within the data.

5.2.7 Producing the report (writing up, discussion)

The final process of data analysis is to present the findings in report form. This study uses the discussion section to “to tell the complicated story of [the] data in a way which convinces the reader of the merit and validity of [the] analysis” (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The discussion provides a detailed description of each theme, including clear references to the data that are used to validate their presence. This will be done in the next section on data integration.

5.8 Limitations of the qualitative study

Qualitative studies have some serious issues related to quality and reliability. Collingridge and Gantt (2008) argue that the basic problems associated with qualitative studies are validity, reliability, and sampling. The researcher went through many practical difficulties during the qualitative study process, which interrupted the smooth running of this study.

The first problem was with the sample selection for the interviews. As discussed before, the sample for the interview was taken from among user generated brand communities on Facebook across the UK. Identifying participants and their place of residence was a difficult process, which took a long time. Also, it would have been expensive to travel across the UK, which was one of the constraints when it came to deciding the sample size. At the same time, the participants targeted for the interview might not necessarily agree to take part in the interview.

Secondly, the study required that participants shared information about their use of social media platforms. Such participants were very sensitive about any information they provided and, therefore, the researcher had to take extra care while conducting the interviews. Moreover, in some cases, the researcher was unable to record the interview because the participants did not feel comfortable about having their personal information and other sensitive information recorded. The researcher could not always take accurate notes during the interviews, as the interviewees often spoke very fast. He therefore tried to recall the conversation in question immediately after the interview.

Thirdly, one of the most common problems in this study, as in other qualitative studies, is being “subjective” (Bryman, 2004:284). Subjective impressions or expressions in the data collection or analysis are a source of potential bias on the part of the researcher, as is argued by McKinnon (1988). In this study, the researcher tried to minimize the risk of bias; however, experiential, knowledge, and subjective bias may have affected the data collection and analysis process, for example, in the sampling, data analysis, and the coding and generating of themes (Seale, 1999).

The fourth limitation of the qualitative method as used in this study comes from the conclusion generated. The qualitative study method is limited in terms of its scope and reach, which is restricted (Bryman, 2004) because of its generalizability. In this study, the researcher also realized that it is difficult to find consistency in findings from a case study to another.

However, as this study used both quantitative and qualitative methods, the problems of validity regarding the reliability of a single research method were minimized, and the combination of both methods enabled the researcher to achieve the generalizability, validity, and reliability he was looking for.

5.9.1 Qualitative study (i.e., interview) results and analysis

This study used mind maps to generate themes in the previous section. Mind maps define themes, as they generate a visual representation of the themes with visual patterns and categories, although the definitions of themes go beyond visual representation and category generation. Braun and Clarke (2006) describe “define and naming” themes as knowing the essence of a theme, and all themes, generated from the data coding and confirming what type of data these themes represent.

This study analyses potential subthemes from the data set. In this study, the themes were gathered from the four main categories of investigation; namely, engagement, participation, loyalty, and word-of-mouth, which is a very broad subject area for the research and therefore results in broader themes. Moreover, the data within each theme was also analysed to examine the existence of potential sub-themes. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that sub-themes help to structure large and complex themes and thereby generate a hierarchy of meaning with the data.

As discussed in the methodology section, the interview responses of the six participants for each of the constructs (i.e., engagement, loyalty, word-of-mouth, and participation) were coded by

grouping responses from all the respondents according to the construct (e.g., all the responses from six participants on participation were grouped together for coding). All the coded data for each construct was then developed into main and sub themes through mind mapping, as suggested in the methodology section with reference to the guidelines of Braun and Clarke (2006).

Below are the details of data findings for the four main themes and sub themes (i.e., engagement, participation, loyalty, and word-of-mouth).

5.9.2 Participation as a main theme

As argued in the study, participation exhibits the behavioural characteristics of engagement in the form of information-sharing, interrelation, and level of involvement, and proves to be one of the components of engagement in user generated online communities. As discussed in the data analysis process section of the methodology, the subthemes for participation were generated by identifying the most frequently referred to words and phrases used in the participation category by the six respondents. This process gave rise to four categories of sub-theme; namely, information-sharing, interaction, involvement, and passion, which are discussed below in detail.

Information-sharing

The qualitative data findings suggest that brand community members share their experiences in online brand communities by sharing information with other members of the community. They respond to questions, comment, share photos, and download videos, etc. This was suggested by:

“Apple has such a big brand community online, which is also another important aspect of Apple because minor to complex issues are dealt independently by the users of such a community. It attracts me because I want to know and share new things about technological aspects of Apple. Normally we use hardly any aspects of the product and interaction with the users in the community helps identify useful new aspects.”

Interviewee 3, Q1

In addition, Apple users go to the brand community to look for an answer to a question from members who have an active presence in the community, and who have knowledge about the use of Apple products:

“I joined the Apple community 3 years ago as a member of the community. First, I followed some members, posted my problem I had with my iPhone 4s sound, and peers provided many solutions to my question and my question had multiple threads among the members. It’s been a fantastic journey so far.”

Interviewee 1, Q1

Interaction

Likewise, the findings for another subtheme interaction suggests that users interact with other members through chat, video calls and conference calls, meetings and meeting up with each other, etc. This takes place because of their interactions in the user generated Apple brand community on Facebook, as suggested by:

“I have been a member of the Apple brand community since 2012 and I have never looked back since. Believe me, the journey after I joined the Apple brand community is fantastic because I have direct connection, interaction and am involved brand-related activities (e.g., we had a small party in London) with the community members. My activities in the brand community have increased significantly over the years and I love this experience.”

Interviewee 4, Q1

Involvement

As their activities in the community increase and they follow other members’ tips, likes, and comments on discussion threads, users’ level of involvement increases at the same time. These activities gain them more and more points to take them to another level. Community members’ level of involvement is defined as cognitive participation and, in this case, the findings suggest that online brand members get involved with other user generated community members by responding to their questions, tagging them with any information, and suggesting videos, meetings, seminars, and new features of Apple products. This is suggested by:

“I started my journey with Apple nearly 5 years ago by buying an iPhone 4. I kept that for nearly a couple of years and then I updated it with a5S. Right now, I am carrying a 6S and I am quite happy with that. See when I took iPhone 4s, I had so much confusion as there were many options. My friends gave me mixed reactions to iPhone, Samsung, and other phones. Therefore, what I did was I researched well using the internet, compared the quality and satisfaction that other users shared online, and read reviews. Finally, when I joined the Apple brand community I found independent reviews and suggestions that helped and motivated me.”

Interviewee 5, Q1

Interest

Quite contrary to what is being argued in the study; namely, that participation is a behavioural aspect of engagement, the data findings shows the pattern that when users participate in user generated brand communities, members express their interest in Apple products because they care, love, and identify themselves with the brand. Other members of the brand community help to intensify their feeling for the Apple products by sharing the same community feeling for the brand. This is suggested by:

“Although there many other touchscreen technologies available, Apple could stand apart from all the others because it introduced the interface through apps, which I found quite interesting. I am very much a technology friendly person, so it fascinated me and my involvement with the Apple brand community gives me same feeling. That is why I chose Apple and I am enjoying the journey.”

Interviewee 3, Q1

The data findings from the qualitative interviews among the user generated brand community champions suggest that they use different ways by which to participate with the other community members. The most common way is by sharing information and intersecting with each other. The results support the behavioural aspect of participation as manifested in sharing, commenting, responding, downloading, chatting, making conference calls, getting together, subscribing, etc., with the brand-related activities, as argued in this study.

However, the result findings further explain the fact that respondents also express interest in the brand through the user generated brand community, which represents the cognitive aspects of their participation. The findings suggest that their level of involvement is high in some cases, which represents the cognitive aspects of participation; however, the intensity of the cognitive and affective aspects of participation are not very high. The results suggest that participation also carries low levels of affective and cognitive aspects, which gain in intensity when these members enter into the engagement zone with the users of generated online brand communities.

5.9.3 Engagement as a main theme

In this study, engagement is defined as being the psychological and behavioural manifestation of consumers' engagement to an engagement object (i.e., online brand community), which passes through an affective, cognitive, and behavioural process in a context-dependent scenario in online brand communities (Brodie et al., 2013). As in the case in the user generated Apple brand community under investigation, peers within the community enter into the engagement process and exhibit their holistic engagement behaviour via the community's activities, which strengthens their loyal behaviour and word-of-mouth activities. They can suggest tips to other members, have meet ups with community members, engage in brand co-creation, and share knowledge, etc.

In addition to the three aspects of engagement, as explored in the qualitative (i.e., interview) study, brand champions exhibited a mixture of the engagement dimensions (i.e., affective, cognitive and behavioural) and social elements as well. Social elements are important in customer driven engagements, such as those that take place in the Facebook brand community for Apple products. Social elements relate to the members' activities (e.g., language, culture, morals, community) that can also influence Apple promotions online and offline, etc., and can finally lead to consumers' loyalty and word-of-mouth.

Affective dimensions

Vigour

The affective dimensions of engagement (e.g., enthusiasm, vigour, excitement, passion, etc.,) relate to various forms of content and interactions. Respondents expressed pleasure in seeing comments on their own posts and they sustained the conversation by replying to these. They also enjoyed commenting on others' content and fostering interactions related to their own content. At other times, they simply enjoyed reading fun and relevant posts made the brand. This includes behaviour such as helping others to solve their problems and engaging in brand community activities through the online brand community, which are an important part of creating loyalty. Engaged members in user generated brand communities show various form of affective

engagement. One of them is vigour, which can accommodate enthusiasm and excitement, as is suggested by:

“I am active in the online brand community, which has made me more passionate about Apple products. I do not feel like I am holding a phone if I use some other phones, like Galaxy, HTC, etc. I feel they are not friendly to use and find it difficult to use them. The reason is I am psychologically attached Apple and its features and apps. Apple products are stronger compared to other manufactures. I have dropped Apple products many times before, especially my phone, but there is little or no damage so far. I am very much attached to Apple because I use it more than my laptop. I cannot even compare it with any other phones and devices.”

Interviewee 4, Q2

Positive emotion (i.e., passion, identity)

Engagement exhibits emotional components such as a sense of identification, shared values, and other emotional elements, and engaged consumers possess these qualities in their relationship with brand communities. Respondents suggested that they find pleasure and enjoyment because of being a part of the user generated Apple brand community and by using Apple products. This is suggested by:

“I dearly love Apple and I can’t think of using another brand apart from Apple. Every time I go out, it gives me immense pleasure. Yes, I carry an iPhone. I can play my songs and make calls, whether I may be on a bus, train, or in a public place. That I am carrying an iPhone gives me immense pleasure and Apple has been able to create that sensation through their marketing channels all around the world.”

Interviewee 5, Q2

Similarly, online brand communities allow individuals to develop their behaviour and identities in line with the features provided by the brands. Online brand communities influence brand activities, as members identify with the online brand community and the brand itself. This is suggested by:

“As I told you, and let me repeat the main reason, when you carry an iPhone, there is a kind of satisfaction. I must say that brand satisfaction with the name itself makes you feel different and no other brand can fulfil that satisfaction for me. The kind of hype about this brand is around the world, and it you feel special. It gives me immense pleasure to use Apple products, especially iPhone.”

Interviewee 5, Q2

In addition, the findings suggest that attachment to online brand communities' influences brand behaviour, as per the example about Apple products as suggested by:

"I am really attached because I am used to it, part of a large community (Apple music, Apple store, Apple iPhone) and I wake up with the discussion lunge of apple brand community and answer and share so much information throughout the day. As for the Apple products, it has become so easy to use and an easy system, and the current contract is quite affordable as well. It suits my lifestyle. I find it something that makes my life easier and benefits my personal life as it works."

Interviewee 2, Q2

The findings of the qualitative study suggest that the affective components of engagement in user generated online brand communities on Facebook are clearly reflected as vigour and identity among the respondents about their brand community and brand-related activities. In addition to these two concepts; namely, vigour and identity, there is a clear indication that engaged members express love, passion, and intrinsic excitement, as indicated by the participants in the interviews.

Cognitive dimension a sub-theme

Absorption

Cognition refers to engaged members' mental state and focus on the online brand community. The cognitive dimension of engagement can be exhibited in two scenarios. One, when you lose track of time, which is known as absorption, and the other, when anything grabs your attention, which is known as attention.

The findings suggest that Apple fans in user generated online brand communities spend most of their time (i.e., absorption) being involved with the community by either chatting, commenting, helping, talking, etc., to each other, as is suggested by:

"The Apple brand community is what I enjoy the most. I spend most of my free time taking to peers and answering and sharing my experiences of Apple products, such as iPhone, iOS, iWatch, iCloud, iTunes, etc., and learning new features of Apple products (e.g., I was sharing features of iOS and I didn't not know that I spent hours on that."

Interviewee 1, Q2

Attention

The findings also suggest that engaged Apple brand champions are attentive towards any brand-related activities in Facebook's user generated online brand community. This is suggested by:

"Every discussion in the community thread attracts me if the topic is related to me specialty like iOS, iPhone, and iPad. The interactions in the community, such as calling peers through conference calls, meet ups with peers, posing questions, etc., takes up my time, energy, and effort."

Interviewee 5, Q2

The findings related to the cognitive dimensions of engagement suggest the fact that Apple brand champions in the user generated online brand community on Facebook are mentally engaged. This is reflected by losing track of time while engaging with the online brand community.

Behavioural dimensions

Consumer engagement behaviour is related to consumers' activities, which are the result of their motivation for the brand. Engaged consumers, although they are not involved in purchases, can influence other consumers by learning, sharing, advocating, helping, and informing others about the brand in the online brand community.

Learning

Engaged consumers learn through using the online brand community at the same time as helping other users and sharing their experiences. The user generated brand community allows brand-related questions to be asked, such as those about new features, and any problems can be discussed. This is suggested by:

"Even I learn from online brand community and they have asked about users' experiences about products. I am emotionally attached to the product and enjoy using Apple products, sharing photos, using apps, using FaceTime with friends, helping other users by sharing my own experiences of using Apple products, posting any difficulties I have while I use it, and even complaining about it to the manufacturer."

Interviewee 6, Q4

The findings also indicate that Apple brand champions in the online brand community have gone through such behaviours (e.g., learning), as is suggested by:

"It gives me a true colour of what this is up to. Then you see the iPhone, on the other hand, which gives an impression that it is being carried by professional and big business people."

In a way, that part influences you as well. This is one of the reasons why I changed from Nakia to Apple.”

Interviewee 5, Q2

Sharing

The findings suggest that Apple brand champions share their knowledge, information, brand-related questions and experiences, and interesting content related to the brand among the members of the community. This is suggested by:

“I have a very good knowledge of Apple products and features, and information related to Apple products and sharing ideas through online community. I am on social media and use most of the platforms. Among them, Facebook is the one I use most. I love to connect with other people on social networks and Apple products have made it a very smooth and good experience.”

Interviewee 6, Q2

Advocating

The findings also suggest that Apple champions in the brand community also advocate for the Apple brand through the brand community by recommending, endorsing, providing feedback, and making comments and suggestions, as is suggested by:

“I always become very positive and critical as well, whatever Apple product I use. I endorse and comment on Facebook’s brand community, like the brands I like and, believe me, I have followed many brands on Facebook and interacted with them, but I always advocate for Apple products first.”

Interviewee 6, Q2

Social characteristics

The findings among the brand champions on Facebook also suggest that their engagement behaviour in the user generated online brand community is influenced by social dimensions, such as their identification with, and internalization of, the community, through the values they share, language, culture, etc., in the community. This is suggested by:

“I enjoy being part of the Apple online brand community because we have a group of members who meet up, are involve in personal conversations and group calls as well, and

who share any new features or problems with Apple product in this community. I had a problem of fraud emails, which was handled by one of my member's friends."

Interviewee 4, Q4

The findings suggest that user generated online brand community champions on Facebook share, learn, and advocate, and identify with and internalize the community's activities through their contact with other online brand community members. Their engagement activities are influenced by the community's characteristics as well. The brand's community values, such as culture and the morals of the community, also affect engagement behaviour. Hence, the social component of engagement is also one additional dimension in the context of user generated online brand communities.

5.9.4 Loyalty as a main theme

Unlike company-initiated brand communities that have a business orientation between the brand and consumers, user generated online brand communities are a result of consumers' love, care, and attachment to a brand, which is based on the personal and professional relationships among members. There is no business orientation, although their engagement activities on such communities influence other members and can work in favour of the brand. Just as company-initiated online communities can have engagement outcomes in the form of loyalty, user generated brand communities also can have a similar outcome.

Engaged consumers exhibit both types of loyalty in the form of their future purchase intention, buying patterns, and commitment to the product. This is because their motivations and purchase behaviour are already positive towards the product, as they are engaged with the brand through different mediums, such as social media platforms, brand communities, etc. As they have gone through the process from participation to engagement, their loyalty is strengthened by positive brand-related behaviour in online brand communities. The findings among brand champions in the Apple user generated brand community suggest that engagement in user generated brand communities could have relationship outcomes in the form of behavioural and attitudinal loyalty.

Behavioural loyalty

Next purchase

Behavioural loyalty is related to the consumer's behaviour of buying from the same brand in the future. The findings of the interviews identified the fact that engagement with the user generated brand community strengthened future purchase intentions with Apple products, as is suggested by:

"I started with Apple and that took a long time because I was quite new, and I had sort of mixed reactions and it is worth going for iPhone family or something else, like Samsung. In the end, I happened to go into the Apple family and, after that, there is no going back, and now, when I upgrade, every time my heart says do not dare to switch to any brand. I am sure I will be choosing iPhone 8 to keep myself satisfied that my phone is superior to others. I do go through all other brands and believe that Apple is better. Even if I find other products that have one or two good features I still do not change. I must say that the process is very quick, but I am less likely to switch to other brands whatever the features other brands may have. All credit to Apple's online brand community in Facebook for my commitment to it."

Interviewee 6, Q3

The findings also suggest that the user generated online brand community plays a significant role in allowing consumers to show their care and future loyalty towards Apple products. This is suggested by:

"Although I was a huge Apple fan even before I joined the Apple online brand community, I have found a channel to prove that I am really a fan. It increased over the years through the online brand community because it allowed me to express my love for the brand through activities such as sharing features, helping others to use Apple products, and so on. I cannot imagine a day or an hour without my iPhone or iPad when I am at home or travelling. When I started my journey with iPhone 4s, I carried it for 2 years. I must say I was quite happy and satisfied with the product: I did not have any sort of trouble and when I switched on to iPhone 5s, I kept iPhone for my wife and even she loved it. I changed my iPhone5s after apple launched the iPhone 6s."

Interviewee 5, Q3

Consumers' brand loyalty is a positive behavioural manifestation towards their favourable brands. Such positive behavioural expressions develop because of the past relationship between consumers and the brand, during which consumers go through different evaluative psychological processes. Therefore, brand loyalty can be referred to as having both psychological and behavioural components:

"I asked my friend just to see how she felt about it in the past. My process of choosing Samsung would be different. I will upgrade the contract and it will not take me long to

decide on the phone because I have used it and know the benefits. The process of choosing will be short as I am a highly active member in the online brand community. The only thing I take a bit longer on are the uses, as, if I am to choose Samsung, it might take me days before I decide.”

Interviewee 3, Q3

Attitudinal loyalty

Commitment

Attitudinal loyalty refers to consumers' future commitment and preferences for a brand. Consumers' engagement through online brand communities can have an impact on their next purchase, future buying intention, preference of one brand over other, and future commitment, etc. The findings also reveal the fact that online brand community activities enhance attitudinal loyalty, as is suggested by:

“I have used Apple for 6 years now. I have not had any major issues. I posted a question on a phishing issue to the community wall and many Apple fans made suggestions about the problem, which was resolved by the service teams following the recommendation of community members. I don't think I would change my mind to change from Apple because I find it quite useful and quite easy to access and, more importantly, I relate to the large Apple community where I learn and share experiences of the brand I always use. Community activities helped me feel more commitment for future purchases and loyalty.”

Interviewee 2, Q3

5.9.5 Word-of-mouth

Recommendation

WoM activities are related to consumers' responses towards the brands they use and their features, or to their attitude towards the brands, as demonstrated in the form of reviewing, blogging, suggesting other uses to members regarding product use and offering help, etc. In the social media context, online brand communities have brought about a new dimension of helping and influencing consumers. This is suggested by:

“I always make recommendations to my friends outside and inside the brand community and have managed to recommend my better half to get Apple products. When someone talks about Apple, I always recommend the brand. I do not even think twice about buying Apple products.”

Interviewee 2, Q4

Sharing and learning

The findings also suggest that personal emotion and engaging with the online brand community influences consumers' internal motivation, which results in consumers sharing and recommending behaviour, as is suggested by:

“You have your brand community; lot of friends and you have your family circle. I share my personal experiences, features of my Apple specialty to other community members, and learn from others as well inside the community. In addition, there are certain times when you argue for and against different brands. I always endorse Apple as my brand and those arguments and discussions bring Apple even closer. You tend to love Apple more and feel attached to it more and more.”

Interviewee 5, Q4

Endorsing

Online brand communities allow consumers to endorse, provide feedback, make comments, etc., and the findings suggest that user generated communities influence such activities, as evidenced by the following statement:

“I provide feedback and comment and even chat to Apple community people and Facebook users on social media. My word-of-mouth is mostly through social media, especially Facebook and Twitter. I do have so many positive experiences and I have been a customer for some time now. There are always minor problems in every product. I don't look at the problem that seriously because what matters is how that problem is resolved and Apple has done it more brilliantly than its competitors via customer service, online forums and communities, and the Apple store itself.”

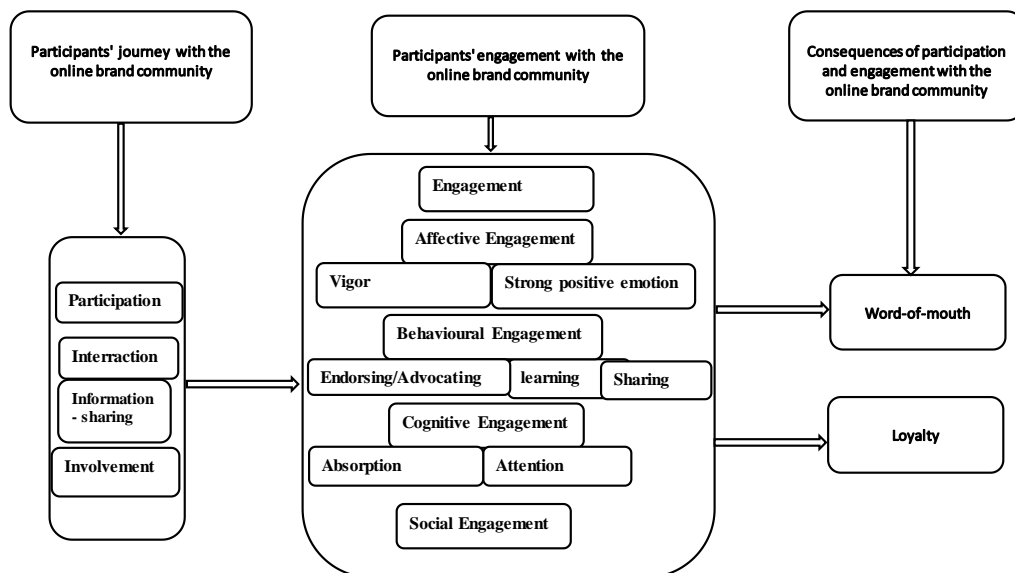
Interviewee 4, Q4

The findings suggest that the online brand community influences the word-of-mouth behaviour among the Apple brand champions. However, WoM activities among the user generated brand community champions differs in term of their preferences. Their activities are dependent on their personal preferences and community activities as well. Their personal motivations being positive towards Apple products is significant when it comes to being engaged with the brand community,

which is intensified further with the help of the brand community. The findings also suggest that the user generated brand community is the influential factor for the word-of-mouth behaviour among the brand champions and that it is not the only source for their engagement with Apple.

The qualitative findings from the interviews, as presented in this chapter, explored the participants' journeys as Apple fans in the user generated online brand community on Facebook. The participants expressed the changes in attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours that happened after their contact with the online brand community, where their interaction changed from participation to engagement and, finally, to loyalty and word-of-mouth. The data shows that they joined the community as a brand lover, enthusiast, or fan of Apple in the first place and that their interactions, information-sharing, and interest in the brand community influenced them emotionally, psychologically, behaviourally, and socially. This eventually increased their loyalty and word-of-mouth. In addition, the findings suggest two new aspects namely, involvement (i.e., interest) for participation and social characteristics (i.e., identification) for engagement, in user generated online brand communities.

Figure 65: The interview participants' journey in the user generated Apple online brand community



Source: Author's representation

5.10 Summary

This chapter has focused on the qualitative research method adopted in the form of an interview-based case study in the first section. This was followed by using the purposive sampling method to collect the interview responses among the Apple brand champions in the user generated online brand community on Facebook. It has also explained the different stages of interview data collection, the selection of potential interviewees, the designing of the interview guide, gaining access to interviews, and conducting the interviews.

The next section discussed how the case interview data was processed specifically: the thematic data analysis technique was employed, as it was a systematic and formal process of data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this study, the procedure of data processing included six stages: data familiarization, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. This section also summarized the potential limitations of the case study method. The final section presented the interview data themes and subthemes. The next chapter will integrate the quantitative and qualitative findings and discuss sub research questions 1-7 (see Appendix 3), before going on to answer the main research question.

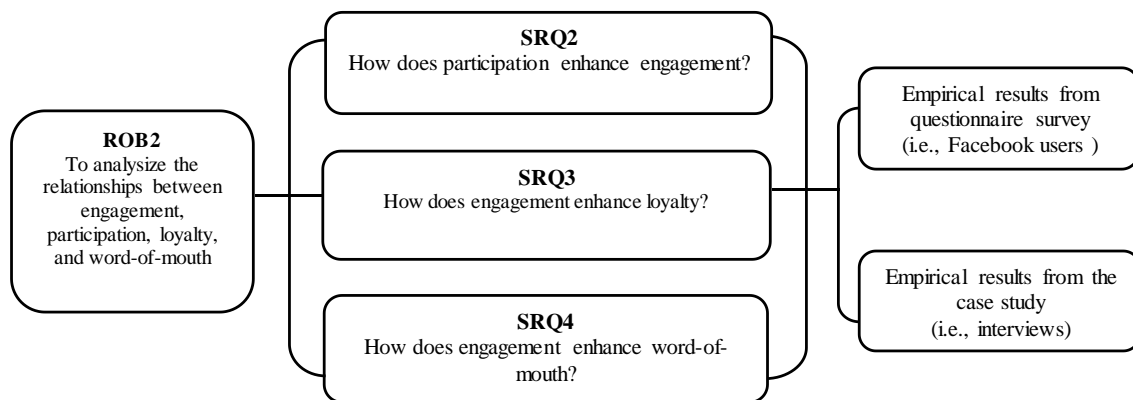
Chapter: 6

Integration of Empirical Findings (i.e., Quantitative and Qualitative Studies) and Discussion

6.1 Introduction

The previous sections (see Chapters 4 and 5) presented the qualitative and quantitative data findings found using the evidence gathered from the data collected in interviews with the brand champions in the Facebook brand community and examining the quantitative data from Facebook users in the UK. The interview data was collected and analysed using thematic analysis in six stages. Moreover, for the quantitative study, data was collected from a questionnaire survey among Facebook users around the UK and analysed using the structural equation modelling technique through AMOS software in SPSS. This chapter combines both the quantitative and qualitative findings for sub research questions 2 to 4 in connection to the specific research objectives through examining the following sub-research questions (see Appendix 3).

Figure 64: Integration of the quantitative and qualitative studies.



As discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, the main research question for this study is “How does consumer engagement influence loyalty and word-of-mouth in user-generated online brand communities? Quantitative and qualitative methods have been used to answer this research question. Structural equation modelling was used as a statistical technique for the quantitative study and interviews

among the online brand champions were carried out for the qualitative study. Both the approaches were carried out at the same time, which permitted the researcher to combine data at the same stages of the research for the analysis and, later, to discuss the results. The previous sections have discussed the process of combining the quantitative and qualitative data in different stages, from collection to discussion. This section integrates these two approaches and critically analyses the results for each of the sub research objectives (SRQ2-SRQ4) in relation to consumer engagement and its relationship with other concepts.

The quantitative and qualitative data was analysed using two main research objectives. The first step analysed engagement and its relationship with other constructs, such as participation, loyalty, and word-of-mouth, using structural equation modelling and thematic analysis. Since these two approaches were carried out together and data collected was carried out at the same time, the triangulation process for data integration became more effective.

Firstly, the empirical results of the qualitative study for SRQ2; namely, “How does participation enhance engagement?”, as posed to the Apple brand champions, suggested that their participation with the online brand community, in majority of the cases, took place when they shared information. The sharing of information happened in the form of making posts, sharing photos, videos, games, or other content, interacting with other members through live chats, video calling, etc., responding to each other’s posts and comments, providing feedback, and contributing to activities. This is suggested by:

“First, I followed some members, posted my problem I had with my iPhone 4s sound, and members in the group provided many solutions to my question and my question had multiple threads among the members. It’s been a fantastic journey so far.”

Interviewee 1, Q1

Users’ level of involvement and interest in the online brand community increased because of such information-sharing and interactions among the members of the brand communities on Facebook:

“I am emotionally attached to the product and enjoy using Apple products, sharing photos, using apps, FaceTime with friends, helping other users by sharing my own experience of using Apple products, posting any difficulties I have while I use it, and even complaining about it to the manufacturer.”

Interviewee 3, Q1

The qualitative findings for SRQ2 found that participants use a wide range of platforms and that they interacted with other individuals, as well as brands, on these platforms. However, our focus was on participants in user generated online brand communities who were fans of Apple and who were members of the user generated online Apple brand community on Facebook. Our study found that community members' participation and engagement encouraged loyalty and word-of-mouth among the community members. However, as engagement captures affective, cognitive, and behavioural dimensions of the interaction process, it has a strong effect on loyalty and word-of-mouth. Participation, on the other hand, was evidenced by behavioural processes in the form of information-sharing, interrelations, and level of involvement, and it proved to be one of the components of engagement in the online community context. Community members talk about their experiences in online brand communities and refer brands to the community members:

"Apple has such a big brand community online, which is another important aspect of Apple because minor to complex issues are dealt with independently by the users of such a community."

Interviewee 3, Q1

Apple brand users who are brand enthusiasts or loyal before they join the brand community become brand champions after they tap into a higher level of connection with their peers in the Apple brand community on Facebook. The most common, in our case, is that Apple users go to the brand community to look for an answer to a question and follow some members who have an active presence in the community. Such members have knowledge about Apple product use and those who seek them out are hoping for an answer. As their activities in the community increase and they follow other members' tips, like, and comment on the discussion threads, users' level of involvement increases. At the same time, these activities gain them more and more points to take them to another level:

"I started my journey with Apple nearly 5 years ago by buying an iPhone 4. I kept that for nearly couple of years and then I updated it with a 5S. Right now, I am carrying a 6S and I am quite happy with that. See then I took iPhone 4s, I had so much confusion as there were many options. When I joined the Apple brand community I found independent reviews and suggestions that helped and motivated me."

Interviewee 5, Q1

In the case of Interviewees 2 and 4, their level of activity increased after they joined the brand community, as is shown below:

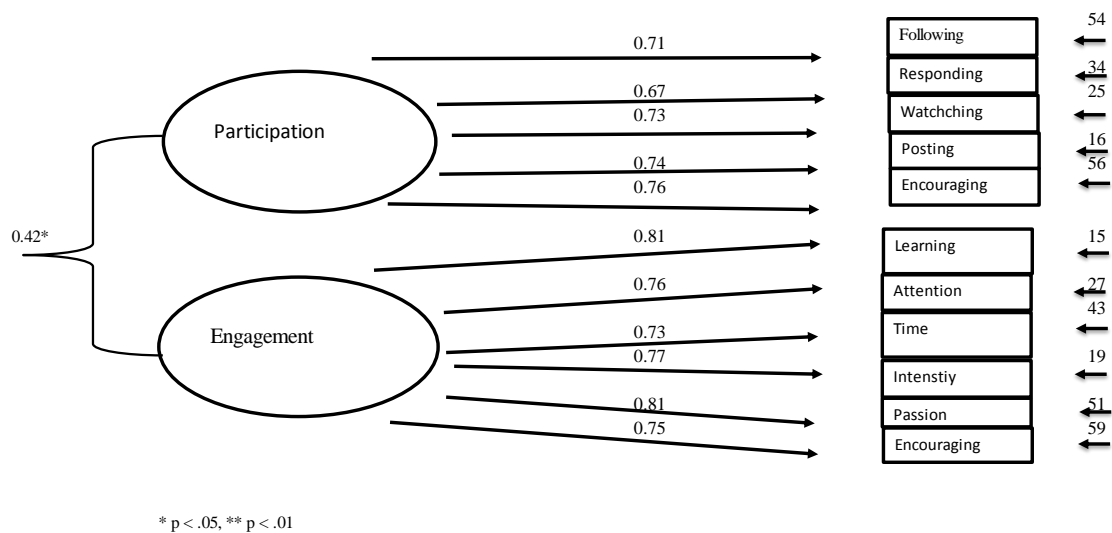
“Since I use Facebook and am active on the Apple brand community on social platforms, I share issues and ask for feedback as well. Not all the suggestions I get about the products are positive but there is honesty among the fans of the Apple in the community.”

Interviewee 2, Q1

Members are connected to each other and engage in frequent experience-sharing on such platforms, which ultimately makes the members learn and share more, and question their brand-related experiences more, thus leading to engagement. The qualitative findings suggest that members become excited and emotionally connected to the brand because of such interactions, which influence their future preferences (i.e., loyalty), recommendation, and sharing (i.e., word-of-mouth) behaviours.

Secondly, the empirical result for SRQ2 in the quantitative study suggests a positive correlation between participation and engagement, as shown in the figure below.

Figure 65: The correlation between participation and engagement



Similarly, the quantitative analysis also suggested a positive relationship between consumers' participation with the brand community on Facebook, which encouraged engagement, with Path Estimates 0.53, t-value 5.9, $p < .05$, as is shown in the figure.

Consumers' participation activities suggest that they learn from interacting with peers as well as possessing the intention to learn from them. Participation, such as a willingness to provide critical feedback and guidance, strengthened the links between customers and companies in brand communities. As in the context of social networking, users post, share, comment, etc., on ideas both with the company or among themselves. Consumers interacted in the brand communities online, where they asked questions, read, responded to, and commented on, peers' posts, watched videos, and were involved in other activities in the brand communities. Participation, through commenting, asking questions, giving feedback, and other activities, happens when users start being involved in experience-based relationships through group activities and other brand-related activities, which encourages a kind of connection among members. Such activities in the online brand community increases the level of involvement among the members, which develops into a close connection. This is because these activities encourage members to interact more, to become active participants among the other members, and to express excitement for the brand through the brand community. This finding supported the previous findings of Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006) and Vivek (2014), and those regarding timely information (Fang, 2008), active interaction between focal consumers and the focal object (Brodie, 2011), and better involvement (Vivek, 2017).

Firstly, the empirical results of the qualitative study for SRQ3, carried out among the Apple brand champions, suggest their active engagement with other online brand community members. Members of the Facebook brand community actively enjoyed and shared their experiences through different activities, such as discussing posts, sharing videos, posts, and product solutions, sharing information about events and news about new events, product use, product functions, uses, etc., in the brand community. They became mentally, physically, and psychologically attached to/associated with the product and exhibited high involvement with, and connections to, the community. In other words, consumers who collected information about the product and who liked to gather information tended to enjoy using the product, associate themselves with it, speak positively about it, go on and on about it, spend most of their time with it, and feel excitement and highly positive emotions about the product, as evidenced by their behaviour in the brand community on Facebook. They exhibited their passion, vigour, and excitement: association could increase their preferences for the products, which leads to positive relationship outcomes in the form of loyalty. The findings from the qualitative study showed that consumers' emotional attachment results in positive relationships. This is shown in the statement that:

“I am really attached because I am used to it, part of a large community (Apple music, Apple store, Apple iPhone) and I wake up with the discussion in the community activities, and answer and share so much information throughout the day. As for Apple products, it has become so easy to use, and the current contract is quite affordable as well. It suits my life style. I find it something that makes my life easier”.

Interviewee 2, Q2

In addition, the community activities of engaged consumers resulted in positive relationship outcomes, as is suggested by:

“I don’t think I would change my mind to change from Apple because I find it quite useful and quite easy to access and, more importantly, I relate to the large Apple community, where I learn and share my experiences of the brand I always use. Community activities helped me feel more commitment for the future purchase and loyalty.”

Interviewee 2, Q3

Engaged consumers in the user generated online brand community expressed their commitment to Apple in relation to their involvement in the community and the help it offered them. This is expressed in the following statement made by one of the Apple brand champions:

“I will upgrade the contract: it does not take me long to decide about the phone because I have used it and know the benefits. The process of choosing will be short, because of being a highly active member in the online brand community. The only thing I take a bit longer on are the uses. If I am to choose Samsung it might take me days before I decide.”

Interviewee 3, Q3

The community engagement relationship goes beyond the community and can result in different outcomes for the brand, as engaged members sustained the relationship longer. This can translate into increased loyalty to the brand (Dessart et al., 2015), as engaged members transformed themselves into being brand loyal through their involvement in the brand community:

“I must say that the process is very quick, but I am less likely to switch into other brands whatever the features other brands may have. All credit to the Apple community and my commitment and enthusiasm for it.”

Interviewee 6, Q3

Other consumers’ input and reviews played an important role in the purchase decision process; such support and content can be found in online brand communities (Wiertz & de Ruyter, 2007). Psychologically engaged online brand community members exhibit higher commitment and loyalty (Bowden, 2009; Clader et al., 2013, 2016):

“I must say I was quite happy and satisfied with the product, I did not have any sort of trouble and when I switched on to iPhone 5s, I kept iPhone for my wife and even she loved it. I changed my iPhone5s after Apple launched the iPhone 6s.”

Interviewee 2, Q3

Consumer engagement emphasizes the psychological and behavioural components of engagement, which are responsible for higher commitment and loyalty as outcomes of users' relationship with the brand:

“My experience was as a consumption unit, but now it has become a habit, and this is because of my community involvement. I am sure it will remain the same in the future.”

Interviewee 2, Q3

Most of the research explains that both the psychological and behavioural components of engagement have a higher effect on relationship outcomes (Brodie et al., 2013; Wirtz et al., 2013; Hollebeek et al., 2016). This is indicated by the statement that:

“I myself have provided many suggestions to many questions, which come under my speciality, like iOS apps, iPod, iBook, iPhone etc.”

Interviewee 2, Q3

Engaged consumers demonstrate both attitudinal and behavioural loyalty towards brands they are associated with, and the brand community functions as a medium by which to achieve such outcomes. Research published before the popularity of user-generated content (i.e., Web 2.0) and the popularity of engagement shows that there is a positive relationship between engagement and loyalty (Algesheimer, Dholakia, & Herrmann, 2005; Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006; Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001).

Likewise, in relationship marketing, loyalty is conceptualized into behavioural loyalty and attitudinal loyalty (Jacoby & Kyner, 1973). Behavioural loyalty, here, means that consumers will continue to purchase products or services from the same supplier. Attitudinal loyalty refers to consumers' commitment or preferences when considering the unique values associated with a brand (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Engaged consumers exhibit both types of loyalty in the form of their future purchase intentions, buying patterns, and commitment to the product. Their motivation and purchase behaviour are already positive towards the product, as they are engaged

with the brand through different mediums, such as social media platforms and brand communities, etc. As they have gone through a process of moving from participation to engagement, their loyalty is strengthened by positive brand-related behaviour in the online brand communities. This is shown in the statement that:

“I relate to the large Apple community, where I learn and share experience of the brand I always use. Community activities helped build more commitment for the future purchase and loyalty.”

Interviewee 2, Q3

Consumers' brand loyalty is a positive behavioural manifestation towards their favourable brands, and such positive behavioural expressions develop because of the past relationship between consumers and the brand, in which consumers go through different evaluative psychological processes. Therefore, brand loyalty can be referred to as having both psychological and behavioural components:

“My process to choose Samsung would be different. I will upgrade the contract: it does not take me long to decide the phone because I have used it and know the benefits. The process of choosing will be short, because of being a highly active member in the online brand community.”

Interviewee 3, Q3

Customer engagement has a foundation in relational marketing and it is significant because of its theoretical foundation, whereas loyalty is a relationship outcome in the form of repeat purchases, retention, and outcome behaviour (Verhoef et al., 2010):

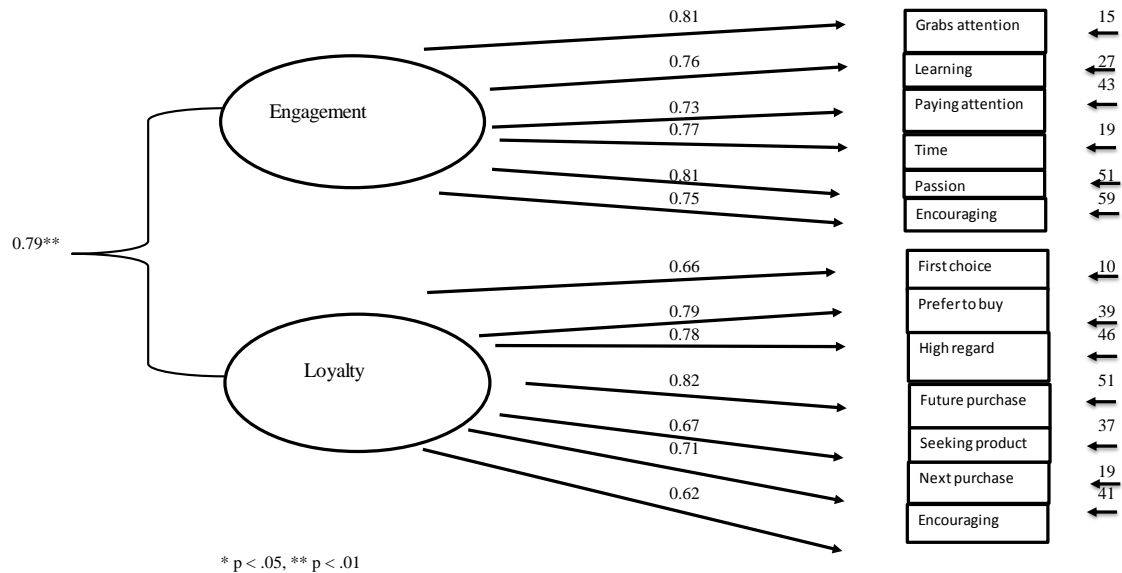
“I am fine with the Apple products. I have been using Apple products since 2012 and so far, I do not have any problems. I had a volume problem in the past, and I took help from brand community. These members are active users and can solve such problems in real time.”

Interviewee 6, Q3

Previous research on consumer engagement supports the fact that one of the consequences of engagement is loyalty, which can be seen in the following examples: Calder et al., (2013, 2016), Vivek et al., (2014), Brodie et al., (2013), and Kumar (2017).

Secondly, the empirical result for SRQ3 from the quantitative study suggested that there is a positive relationship between consumer engagement and loyalty, as shown in the figure below.

Figure 66: The correlation between engagement and loyalty



The findings suggest that engaged consumers in the Facebook brand community posted brand-related questions, were involved in discussions with many other members, and shared their vigour (i.e., excitement and enthusiasm) in the form of new features of the brand and their problems in using the brand's products. They wanted to seek out any new information about the product and any brand-related events, videos, games, etc., and experiences with the brand community on Facebook. This intensifies behaviour in the form of vigour (i.e., excitement or enthusiasm) and identity and, hence, the brand becomes a central part of their everyday activities. As a result of their association with the brand, they identify it with their personality results in terms of their future preferences for the brand and their loyalty. Previous research by Patterson et al., (2006), which is supported by other authors (Hollebeek, 2011a, 2011b; Mollen & Wilson, 2010; Brodie et al., 2013), also supports the same concept.

Firstly, the empirical result from the qualitative study for SRQ4 suggests, from the qualitative study carried out among the Apple brand champions, that they concentrate more on the brand

community. As their level of psychological attitude towards the object of engagement is highly active, they spend most of their time engaged in activities related to the focal object, which is the result of their learning, intention to learn, and endorsing behaviour. In addition, their intensity of engagement is physically and mentally intense, and they are full of vigour, passion, and excitement for the engagement object. Their knowledge of the brand, as revealed through related activities, is high and takes the form of endorsing, making recommendations, and sharing information with others. This is suggested by one of the Apple fans in the following statement:

“Even I learn from the user generated online brand community and have asked about user’s experiences about products. I am emotionally attached to the product and enjoy using Apple products, sharing photos, using apps, Face Timing with friends, helping other users by sharing my own experiences of using Apple products, posting any difficulties I have while I use them, and even complaining about it to the manufacturer.”

Interviewee 6, Q4

Hollebeek and Chen (2014) also identified that the customers’ word-of-mouth is an indispensable consequence of customer engagement. Recent research has argued that engagement makes customers advocate for brands (Vivek et al., 2014; Kumar, 2015). Cheung, Lee, & Jin (2011) claimed that, in customers ready to engage with an online community, there will be a greater chance of them spreading positive word-of-mouth about the brand. Engaged online brand community members possess a higher level of commitment for the brand, which leads them to interact more and to spread positive word-of-mouth both online (e.g., among brand community members) and offline (e.g., among friends and in family circles). This is shown in the statement that:

“You have your brand community, lots of friends, and you have your family circle. I share my personal experiences and features of my Apple speciality with other community members and learn from others as well inside the community.”

Interviewee 5, Q4

The literature on online brand communities shows that consumer engagement among community members enhances customers’ WoM intention (S. Ray et al., 2014) and that there is a positive relationship between community engagement and word-of-mouth intentions. The following statement is evidence of this:

“I always recommend my friends outside and inside the brand community, and I have managed to recommend my better half to get Apple products. When someone talks about it, I make recommendations. I do not even think twice about buying Apple products.”

Interviewee 2, Q4

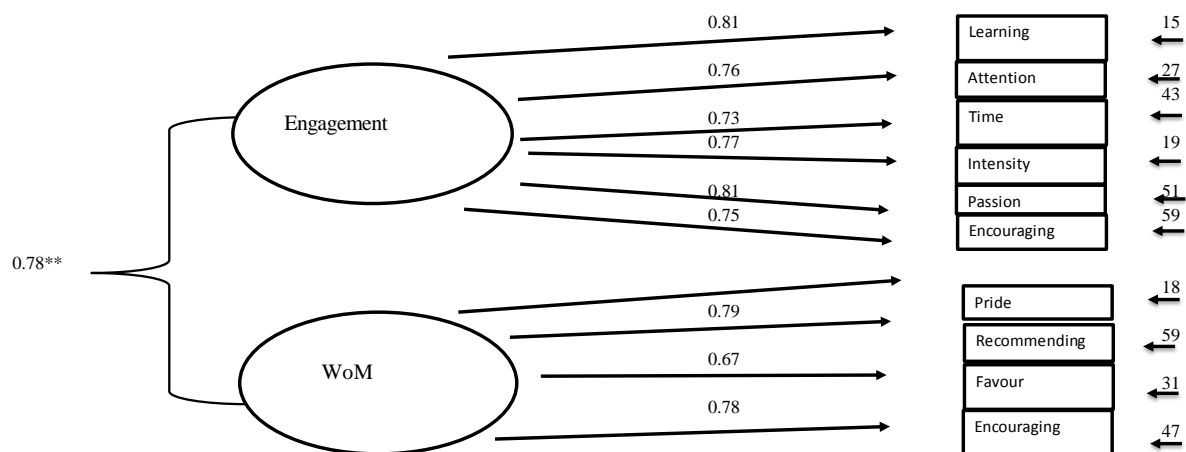
Consumers who identify with a brand or brand community are more likely to recommend the company to other consumers (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003); furthermore, they frequently purchase the brand's products (Ahearne et al., 2005) and make positive and supportive comments about the brand (Algesheimer et al., 2005; Scarpi, 2010):

“Even I have shared experiences through an Apple website and have asked about users’ experiences about products. I am emotionally attached to the product and really enjoy using Apple products, sharing photos, using apps, Face Timing with friends, helping other users by sharing my own experiences using Apple products, posting any difficulties I have while I use them, and even complaining about it to the manufacturer.”

Interviewee 3, Q3

Similarly, the quantitative findings for SQR4 also supported the fact that engagement positively influences word-of-mouth activities, as is shown in the figure below.

Figure 67: The correlation between engagement and word-of-mouth



In the online brand community context, members' WoM activities are related to their responses to use of brands and their features, or their attitude towards the brands, as expressed in the form of reviewing, blogging, suggesting other uses to members regarding product use, and offering help (Kumar et al., 2016). In the social media context, along with helping and making suggestions about the brands or product, complaining behaviour is also very significant. In both the contexts (i.e., social media or online brand communities), customers or members influence each other. Engaged

consumers in the online community endorsed, advocated, shared information, and learned from interactions with others and the knowledge shared about the brands, as is shown in the results of this study. This is supported by the previous research of Cheung, Lee, and Jin (2011), Kumar et al., (2016) and Brodie et al., (2013), which further reinforces the fact that engagement makes customers endorse, advocate, share information, and learn from their interactions with others and the knowledge shared in online communities. Previous research also supports the fact that engagement influences word-of-mouth activities, as in the examples of Dessart et al., (2015) and Vivek et al., (2014).

During the qualitative interview stage, the brand champions from the Apple online brand community suggested that their journey from participation to engagement and, eventually, to increased loyalty and word-of-mouth was built through online brand community. This happened in the form of learning from community members asking questions, reading about the brand they use, and taking part in events, activities, meets ups, and conference calls. They also spent most of their time in the community's activities, were passionate about the brand community's activities, and shared and endorsed their experiences both in the community members and offline. In addition, the empirical results from the quantitative study carried out among Facebook users suggested that their participation and engagement with the online brand community on Facebook increased their relationship behaviour in the form of loyalty and word-of-mouth.

Therefore, the quantitative and qualitative studies were closely integrated with each other in terms of providing confirmation of some important findings. This enhanced the external validity of the overall research. Apart from the triangulation of the results, the combination of the quantitative and qualitative approaches also has the potential to overcome the limitations of adopting a single method. The triangulation evidence was mainly related to SRQ2-SRQ4 for ROB2 and was used to analyse the interrelationships between participation, engagement, loyalty, and word-of-mouth.

This section has analysed the interrelations between, and consequences of, engagement, participation, loyalty, and word-of-mouth and has compared the qualitative and quantitative findings with the extant literature. The findings from both the studies suggest the fact that participation initiates the engagement process and that it plays an important role for the consequences of engagement and participation. On the other hand, engagement, loyalty, and word-of-mouth are

positively connected and influence loyalty and word-of-mouth in the online brand community. The results show that engaged consumers have a higher probability of using products, searching about products, making a future purchase, and being a fan of the product, as well as sharing information about the product, learning more about the product, and endorsing the product.

In addition, this section has suggested that the mixed research method approach is more suitable than a single method approach when it comes to relating the reliability of the findings. The quantitative and qualitative studies were closely integrated with each other in terms of providing confirmation about some important findings. This enhanced the external validity of the overall research. Apart from the triangulation of results, the combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches also has the potential to overcome the limitations of adopting a single method.

This next section will discuss all the sub research questions, from 1-7. Firstly, it will discuss SRQ1's engagement components using the evidence from the qualitative study and it will answer the main research question. Secondly, the questionnaire data specifically suggests that the three dimensions of engagement contain affective, cognitive, and behavioural elements. The findings suggest that participants' engagement varies according to the type of activities they are involved in. Engagement is manifested cognitively when participants spend most of their time on brand community activities and when they are very intense and passionate about their interactions or discussion. Engagement represents behavioural dimensions, such as when users comment, respond, endorse, and recommend. Both the studies support the fact that engagement dimensions come out differently according to the context and situation.

6.2 Discussion

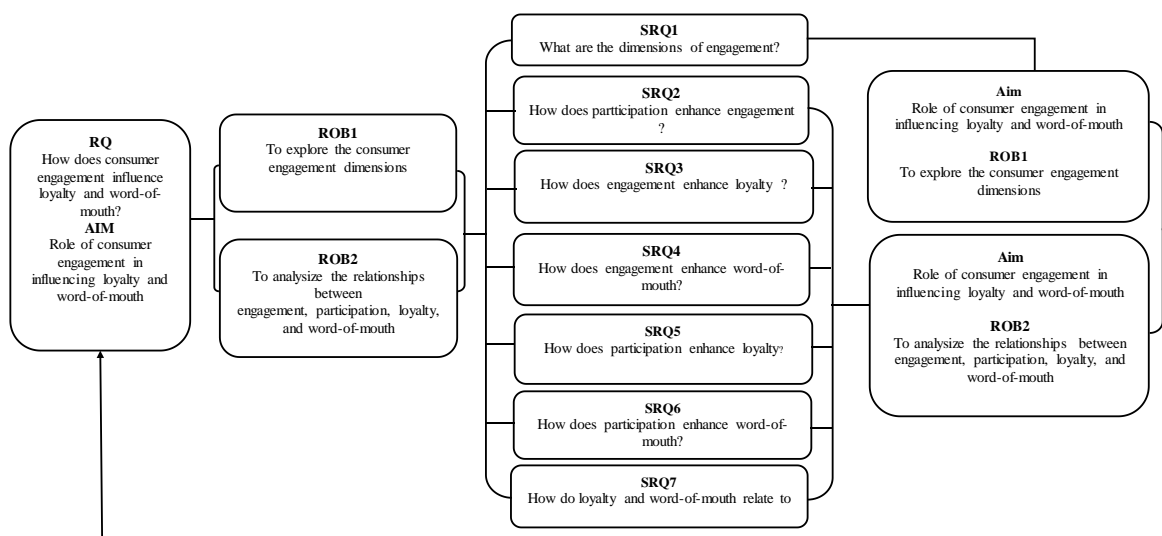
This research empirically investigates the role of consumer engagement in influencing loyalty and word-of-mouth in user generated online brand communities. To investigate the research problems set out for this study, as discussed in the methodology section, quantitative and qualitative methods were chosen and both methods were used concurrently to explore the research objectives.

Qualitative and quantitative methods were used in the form of a questionnaire survey and semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews were conducted among six Apple brand

champions from the Facebook online brand community and a sample of 551 Facebook users was collected from around the UK. This was done to investigate the two main objectives: the dimensions of engagement and the relationships between participation, engagement, loyalty, and word-of-mouth. The quantitative study provides support for the two research objectives; namely, the dimensions of engagement and the relationship between participation, engagement, loyalty, and word-of-mouth, whereas the qualitative study justifies these objectives even further.

Through the application of quantitative statistical analysis and the qualitative interview-based case studies, this thesis aims to explore the central research question: How does consumer engagement influence loyalty and word-of-mouth in user-generated online brand communities? This central question is broken into two specific research objectives: ROB1 and ROB2. ROB1 is explored from the SRQ1 through empirical results collected from the qualitative study and ROB2 is analysed using sub research questions (SRQ2, SRQ3, SRQ4, SRQ5, SRQ6, and SQ7) and by using the empirical results from both the quantitative and qualitative data collected from the interviews and survey. SRQ2, SRQ3, and SRQ4 are analysed using the empirical results of both the quantitative and qualitative studies, whereas SRQ5, SRQ6, and SQ7 are analysed through the quantitative study, as discussed below.

Figure 68: Classification table of the main research question, objectives, and sub research questions



As shown is in Figure 66, SRQ1 was explored using the qualitative data gathered from the interviews held with the Apple brand champions in the user generated online brand community.

The findings for SRQ1 supported the dimensions of consumer engagement as argued in this study (see section 2.3.1) as comprising a combination of cognitive, affective, and behavioural elements. In addition, the findings helped to answer the main research question (see Appendix 4 and Appendix 5) by adding a new dimension to a conceptual model of consumer engagement in online brand communities. The consumer engagement dimensions support the argument that engagement is a combination of affective, behavioural, and cognitive components. As argued in this study, consumer engagement possesses a higher level of affective, behavioural, and cognitive characteristics during and after users' interactions with online brand community members. As a result, engaged consumers contribute most of their physical, mental, and behavioural characteristics to the brand community's activities. The findings support that brand community members express affective engagement characteristics in different forms, such as vigour (e.g., excitement, enthusiasm, etc.,) and strong positive emotion. Engaged members in the online brand community are involved in intense and regular interactions and experience-sharing, which enables them to express their emotional and mental energy towards the brand community and their emotions (e.g., love, joy, passion, etc.,) towards the brand community's activities. In addition, the findings also supported that brand community members expressed their cognitive engagement characteristics. Engaged members in the brand communities often contributed most of their time and activities, and it was difficult for them to detach from the brand community's activities (e.g., leaving feedback, examining new features, and information-sharing, etc.,) Finally, the findings also support that brand community members express their behavioural engagement by sharing, learning, and advocating among the brand community's members. Brand community members express their behavioural characteristics (e.g., giving support and feedback, giving recommendations, answering questions, offering help, etc.,) within the online brand community.

The findings of the qualitative study (see Section 5.9) provided evidence that Apple brand champions in Facebook's online brand community exhibit the predicted multi-dimensionality elements of consumer engagement, which are thus reflected in our findings. The Apple brand champions' experiences with the brand community suggested the fact that they not only express their preconceived thoughts about the brand community but also that such experiences deepened

and clarified their thoughts, feelings, and emotions because of their positive and rich experiences, and the insights they gained, among their brand community peers. Such positive and rich insights were experienced through different elements of engagement, such as vigour (e.g., enthusiasm), strong positive emotions (e.g., joy, care, passion, etc.), attention (e.g., difficulty in detaching from the Apple online brand community interactions or activities), absorption (e.g., spending more time engaged in the Apple online brand community's activities), sharing (e.g., Apple's new features, events, etc.), learning (e.g., asking questions about uses of Apple products), and advocating (e.g., recommending Apple products, helping others to use Apple features), that were shared with the online brand community members.

Previous studies on engagement (see section 2.3.1), as discussed in this study, provide engagement dimensions as a multi-dimensional concept. However, there are various dimensions discussed in the extant engagement literature. From a single dimensional perspective, Doorn et al., (2010) and Kumar et al., (2010) consider engagement as a behaviour manifested towards a brand. The findings of this study support the multi-dimensional dimensions of engagement (e.g. Brodie et al., 2013; Hollebeek et al., 2014, 2016; Hollebeek & Chen, 2014; Vivek et al., 2012; Clader et al., 2016). Previous researchers conceptualise engagement from a single to a multidimensional construct. The multidimensional construct combines cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions. Following this approach, consumer engagement has been defined as a cognitive, affective, and behavioural commitment to pursue an active relationship with a brand (Mollen & Wilson, 2010; Wirtz et al., 2013). So far, the most widely used multidimensional definition of engagement in relationship marketing comes from Brodie et al., (2013). In addition, this study adds a social dimension to the multi-dimensional definitions of engagement, as proposed by Brodie et al., (2013).

The new social dimension of engagement

The qualitative findings (see section 5.9) identified a new dimension as being the social dimension of engagement, which is separate from the other three (i.e., affective, cognitive and behavioural). The members of the user generated Apple online brand community on Facebook expressed the fact that they maintained a good relationship with other group members and users of Apple because they identified themselves with other Apple group members, as they are like-minded people who have formed a community and who engage in group activities. They are together in the group because their thinking about, and behaviour regarding, Apple products and their usefulness are similar.

In addition, Apple brand champions internalize their goals and values to match the goals and values of the user generated Apple brand community. In consumer driven brand communities, the social components of engagement play a significant role, and contribute to, the component of engagement. Members in user generated brand communities develop their relationships based on their identification and internalization with the community, as they share the same feelings for the community's values, morals, activities, commitments, and the sense of interconnectedness that exists among the group members. These are different from the three dimensions of engagement. Hence, community characteristics have significant roles to play in developing engagement in consumers.

Engagement consequences/outcomes in the online brand community

The qualitative findings for SRQ1 (see section 5.9) have answered the main research question (see Appendix 4). The qualitative findings suggest that engaged consumers contribute most of their time and efforts to comments, responses, likes, questions, suggestions, and interactions. They are also engaged in sharing, learning, and advocating, which they do with vigour (e.g., enthusiasm, excitement) and strong positive emotions (e.g., joy and passion) in the online brand community on Facebook. Such activities (i.e., affective, behavioural, and cognitive), as carried out among the online brand community members, strengthen the relationships among the brand community members and this can enhance their loyalty and word-of-mouth for the brand.

The participants (i.e., Apple brand champions) expressed the fact that their engagement with the user generated brand community strengthened their thoughts, feelings, and emotions towards the brand community and that such experiences deepened and clarified their thoughts, feelings, and emotions. This led them to identify with others, and internalize the values of the brand community, because of their positive and rich experiences, and the insights that they had gained, because of interacting with their peers in the brand community. Such positive and rich insights were experienced through different elements of engagement, such as vigour (e.g., enthusiasm for interacting with Apple fans in the online brand community on Facebook) and strong positive emotion (e.g., joy, care, and passion of the Apple fans in online brand community on Facebook). Attention (e.g., concentrating on responses, comments, and chatting with the Apple brand community members), absorptions (e.g., spending most of their time on Apple brand community members' interactions), sharing, learning, and advocating, and identifying with and internalizing

the community's morals and values eventually led users' to be ever more loyal and more involved in word-of-mouth activities for Apple products.

Reference to previous studies in the extant literature supports the existence of engagement outcomes, such as loyalty and word-of-mouth. Previous research supports the fact that consumer's engagement with a brand community encourages loyalty and word-of-mouth. Leckie et al., (2016;), Vivek et al., (2012), Wirtz et al., (2013), Hollebeek, (2011), Kumar & Pansari (2016) Hollebeek et al., (2016), Gummerus et al., (2012), and Brodie et al., (2013), who have published research on the engagement consequences in relationship marketing literature, explain the fact that there is a positive relationship between consumers engagement and loyalty. Likewise, research published by Hollebeek and Chen (2014) also provided sufficient explanation of the fact that word-of-mouth is one of the consequences and major relationship outcomes of customer engagement. This is also supported by the recent research of Brodie et al, (2013) and Vivek et al., (2014). Cheung, Lee, and Jin (2011) and Kumar et al., (2016) further reinforce the finding that engagement makes customers endorse, advocate, share information, and learn from the interactions and knowledge shared about the brands with an online community.

To conclude, engaged consumers who are a part of community are influenced by their community's characteristics, such as emotional attachment, group identification, and commitment to being a member of the group etc., are significant, as they interact with, and share, their brand-related experiences among the community members and are involved with the community's characteristics, which leads them to engage more and more. In the process, they contribute most of their time and efforts to the group's activities, take part in events, group calls, meet ups, and subscribe and share tips with other members. Engaged consumers identify with brand-related discussions or any brand-related issues, because they have become passionate about the brand. They relate to community activities as their own and community-related activities attract their attention. They are motivated by brand community engagement and, therefore, their brand-related behaviour is elevated to sharing information, buying, commitment, giving feedback, and endorsing the brand and other brand-related activities, which ultimately encourages or enhances their loyalty and word-of-mouth activities.

As consumers engage with the online brand community, their brand-related activities intensify because of their involvement as a community member. In the context of online brand communities, the traditional markers, such as a sense of interconnectedness, belonging, and being a member of

the same collective group, go one step further to reach larger numbers of members. Consumers could be brand enthusiasts or loyal consumers before they begin their journey of participating as a community member, as they might have some brand-related questions or information to share. Community characteristics, such as emotional attachment, group identification, and commitment to being a member of the group, etc., are significant. These characteristics make users interact with others and share their brand-related experiences among the community members, and they become involved with the community's characteristics, which leads them to engage more and more. In the process, they contribute most of their time to the group, take part in events, group calls, and meet ups, and subscribe and offer tips to other members. In the case of the Apple brand community, when members started their journey as a member, they wanted to know more about the brand or liked the brand, found the brand interesting, had used brand before, had positive experiences, or loved the brand, and so on. However, contact with the brand community not only helped them to engage mentally and physically: they spent most of their time on the Facebook brand community and spent most of their time commenting, responding to others, liking content, asking questions, making suggestions, and taking part in events. They also engaged in social interactions, such as community meet ups among the members and, finally, their brand-related activities encouraged their brand loyalty and word-of-mouth, as they were mentally and physically involved with the brand through the brand community. In addition, the findings suggest that their loyalty and word-of-mouth activities increased as they took part in the brand community's activities.

Apple brand community members can talk and interact with their peers. The findings show that their level of participation and engagement is largely dependent on how they share their information and level of attachment among other members. Members' engagement does not extend to those who are not engaged and who merely participate in the community. Community members must have sufficient information to share with other members and feel a sense of attachment to the community to qualify as experiencing engagement. This is manifested in providing tips to other members, taking part in meet ups and conference calls, and co-creating with the brand and the community as well. In this sense, engagement in the Apple brand community is not only related to individual engagement; it is also motivated by the other members' engagement and, hence, social engagement is an integral part of brand community engagement.

However, aside from these three dimensions of engagement, members of brand communities develop their relationship based on their attachment to the community, as they share the same

feelings for the community's values, morals, and activities, and feel commitment to, and interconnectedness with, the group members while engaging in brand-related activities, which is different to the three dimensions of engagement. When the members' engagement is not driven by the brand, their interactions, or connections, their sharing insights are affected by the community's characteristics and, hence, their engagement is shaped as they become involved in the community's activities. Hence, community characteristics have significant roles to play in transforming consumers' engagement and business outcomes. In the context of brand communities, in addition to the affective, cognitive, and behavioural aspects, the social aspect is also necessary in terms of social engagement, as the interview data also suggests. This is an area for future research.

SRQ2 was analysed using the empirical results from the quantitative and qualitative study. The findings for SRQ2 supported that the characteristics of consumers' participation are behavioural manifestations, as argued in this study (see section 2.6), which is a combination of information-sharing and interaction characteristics. In addition, the findings answered the main research question (see Appendix 3) by adding the new characteristic of involvement (i.e., interest) to consumer participation in the online brand community environment.

First, the relationship value between participation and engagement is path coefficient 0.53 and the correlation of 0.42* suggested a positive relationship value. The findings from the quantitative study provide values (see Figure 19) for consumer participation as a behavioural manifestation, which supports the fact that consumer participation is the combination of information-sharing and interaction. The research findings suggest that members of the Facebook online brand community interacted with their peers through sending messages, taking part in live chats and video calling, and sharing information (e.g., tagging friends, following other members, creating text posts, sharing photos, responding to each other's posts, commenting, and providing feedback).

Second, the findings of the qualitative study supported the fact that Apple brand champions in the user generated online brand community demonstrated behavioural representations of the predicted two characteristics of participation; namely, information-sharing and interaction, as is reflected in the findings. Apple brand champions in the user generated brand community on Facebook interacted with other Apple brand community members by asking questions about Apple products and their use, reading posts from other Apple users, responding to the questions posed by other Apple users, and commenting on members' posts.

This finding is aligned with the past research on participation as comprising information-sharing and interaction (Bendapudi & Leone 2003; Wheelock et al. 2012; Leckie, C. & Johnson, L. W. 2016; Cheung et al., 2011; Brodie et al., 2011b, Vivek et al., 2012; Wirtz et al., 2013). Consumers interact with brand communities online when they ask questions, read content, respond to and comment on peers' posts, watch videos, and become involved in other activities in the brand communities. These activities relate to the behavioural representation of interacting with the brand communities. The previous research shows that consumers participate with the focus objects (e.g., brands, services, or stakeholders) by sharing information and that they want to interact with likeminded people; however, the focal object is the brand community in this case. One of the important components of customer participation is interaction.

Involvement as a new aspect of consumer participation

The new finding (see section 5.9) from the qualitative interviews is identified as “involvement” and this was seen in the Apple brand champions in the user generated online brand community on Facebook. A higher level of interest and knowledge makes highly involved customers talk more about a brand than customers who are not highly involved (Islam & Rehman, 2016). Involvement is exhibited in the form of cognitive, affective, and motivational aspects (Smith & Godbey, 1991) in individuals participating in the user generated online brand community on Facebook. The findings suggest that participation with online brand community members developed involvement, as users wanted to learn more about the brand because they were interested in it, loved the brand, and were passionate about Apple products; therefore, being part of the online brand community helped them to share their experiences, learn from the community, and engage with the community.

The participation and engagement relationship and its outcomes

The quantitative findings supported the hypothesis that consumer participation has a positive relationship with consumer engagement. Participation enhanced engagement in online brand communities, because, when consumers participated in the brand communities they followed on Facebook, they shared information, such as posts, photos, videos, and games or other content, interacted with other members through live chat, video calling, etc., responded to each other's posts and comments, provided feedback, and contributed to the activities of the community. Consumers' participation activities suggested that they learned from their interactions with peers

and that they also possessed the intention to learn from them. Participation, such as the willingness to provide critical feedback and guidance, strengthened the links between customers in online brand communities, which led them to engage with the brand community.

The findings of the qualitative study also support the supposition that users' participation (e.g., information-sharing and interaction) increased their interest, which led them to engage with Apple brand champions in the user generated online brand community on Facebook. The findings suggested that the more they shared information and interacted with the Apple brand champions, the higher the level of interest they developed in the Apple brand's community members. This turned into social bonds and connections among the Apple brand community members, which led to engagement both among the brand community and the brands as well. Also, Apple champions in the user generated online brand community participated in interaction and participation through commenting, dealing with questions, giving feedback, and other activities, and their involvement in the Apple brand community's activities increased their interest. This established a connection between the members and eventually led to engagement.

The findings support the previous participation research of Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006) and Vivek et al., (2014), which found that active interaction between focal consumers and the focal object (Brodie, 2011) and increasing involvement (Vivek et al., 2012; Rehman et al., 2016) led to engagement. Consumers' connections with other members suggests the fact that they want to get involved as they can learn from other members and they are interested in learning from them, as well as being interested in entering into the co-creation process. Consumers' participatory activities are strongly related to learning, and the intention to learn, from the brand communities. Consumers also want to participate in, and become involved with, the brand community's activities because they are interested in learning and gathering information about the brand through brand communities.

To sum up, the findings of this study suggest that consumer participation in online brand communities is exhibited through the cognitive, affective, and behavioural aspects of their participation. Consumers with activate participation in the online brand community on Facebook asked questions, read content, responded to, and commented on, peers' posts, watched videos, and provided feedback. Such activities increased their interest in the brand community through frequent interactions and experience sharing, which developed into higher involvement and led to

engagement. Hence, participation, as exhibited in some form of behavioural, cognitive, and emotional activities, is not as effective as engagement.

The quantitative and qualitative findings for SRQ3 supported the fact that consumers' engagement is positively related to loyalty, as argued in this study (see section 2.7). Hence, the findings answered the main research question (see Appendix 3), which investigated whether engagement enhances loyalty in online brand communities.

The quantitative findings (see Figure 58) supported the hypothesis that there was a positive relationship value between engagement and loyalty, as argued in SRQ3. The relationship value between engagement and loyalty, which is path coefficient 0.67** and correlation 0.79**, suggests a positive relationship value. Engaged members of the online brand community on Facebook actively exercised their mental, emotional, and behavioural activities among other members. They were involved in different activities, such as the discussion of posts, sharing videos and posts, and finding product solutions, event information, news about new events, product use, and product functions and uses, etc., in the brand community. By doing so, they became mentally, physically, and psychologically engaged with the brand community's activities and exhibited a higher level of involvement, interaction, knowledge-sharing, and connection through their brand community activities. In other words, the findings suggest that brand community members collect information about the products and like to gather information, share their enjoyment of using the product, and discuss their association. They also liked to talk a lot about the products, spent most of their time taking about them, and expressed their strong positive emotions, etc., in the online brand community. Such activities, carried out in the online brand community on Facebook, influenced their mental, physical, and psychological activities and enhanced their preferences for the product. As a result, the brand preferences of consumers who developed such knowledge about the product through the brand community on Facebook experienced engagement that resulted in increased loyalty for the brand.

To be specific, the findings suggest that brand community members on Facebook posted brand-related questions, engaged in discussion with many other members, and shared and advocated regarding their excitement about new features of the brand. Moreover, they also shared the problems they had experienced while using Apple products, asked for any new information about the product, and shared their own experiences, which intensified their engagement behaviour. This

meant that the online brand community became a central part of their everyday activities because of their close association with online brand community. Moreover, they started to contribute much of their time to the brand community's activities, as they became involved with the brand activities in such a way that they could not detach themselves from the brand community's activities on Facebook. This encouraged their loyalty to increase to levels that were higher than before and higher than those in individuals outside the community.

Moreover, the findings suggest that cognitive engagement among brand community members results loyalty in two ways. Those who were cognitively engaged gave their whole attention (i.e., difficult to detach) to the community activities and preferred to buy (i.e., behavioural) and preferred to use (i.e., attitudinal), thus representing the two characteristics of loyalty. Likewise, those who were cognitively engaged (e.g., absorption) with the online brand community and lost track of their time searched for future purchases more, thus representing behavioural loyalty. Likewise, the findings for affective engagement among brand community members on Facebook provided evidence of two types of loyalty. Those who were affectively engaged preferred to use the brand (i.e., attitude) and preferred to buy (i.e., behavioural). In addition, those who were behaviourally engaged expressed their attitudinal (i.e., high regard) loyalty and behavioural (i.e., future buy) loyalty. Hence, the multidimensionality of engagement was represented in the loyalty behaviour among the members of the online brand community.

Likewise, the qualitative findings supported the positive relationship between engagement and loyalty, as argued in SRQ3. Apple brand champions expressed their positive thoughts, feelings, and emotions because of the rich experiences and insights they had gained with brand community peers in the user generated online brand community on Facebook. Such positive and rich insights were experienced through different elements of engagement, such as vigour (e.g., enthusiasm), strong positive emotion (e.g., joy, care, passion etc.), and attention (e.g., difficult to detach from the Apple online brand community interactions or activities). Also, absorption (e.g., spending more times on Apple online brand community activities), sharing (e.g., Apple's new features, events, etc.), learning (e.g., asking questions about the uses of Apple products) and advocating (e.g., recommending Apple products, helping others to use some Apple features) with members of the online brand community enhanced users' loyalty to Apple.

In addition, previous studies on consumer engagement also support the fact that engagement is a multidimensional concept and that loyalty is one of the consequences of the engagement relationship. The affective components (i.e., vigour) of engagement, as proposed by Patterson et al., (2006) are also supported by other authors (Hollebeek, 2011a, 2011b; Mollen & Wilson, 2010). Such mental and physical energy translates into enthusiasm and passion because of regular, intense interactions with peers on social media platforms via posting comments and feedback (Vivek et al., 2012; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). This is one of the aspects of the affective dimension of customer engagement and it leads to loyalty in online brand communities (Wirtz et al., 2013; Kumar et al., (2017). Previous findings support this finding, as the affective dimension of engagement represents the addictive and lasting level of the emotions a consumer experiences with focal engagement objects (Calder et al., 2013, 2016), where mental and physical strength is expressed in different forms, such as feeling and passion (Vivek et al., 2014). Such feeling for the engagement object can be reflected through two sub aspects of affective engagement: vigour (e.g., eagerness to interact, which leads to commitment) and strong positive emotions with the focal object in the virtual environment. Behavioural engagement (i.e., sharing, learning, and advocating) could represent their real behaviour, such as the desire to help others to solve their problems and to engage in the brand community's activities through the online brand community, which is an important part of creating loyalty (Brodie et al., 2013). In addition, the previous research also suggests a positive link between engaged consumers' future commitment, future buy, and purchase. Online brand community activities (e.g., sharing strong bonds and emotional attachment, increased enthusiasm and intrinsic motivation, feelings of identification) through brand community activities (Dholakia & Durham, 2010; Dessart et al., 2015), result in better relationship outcomes, such as behavioural and attitudinal loyalty. Engaged consumers exhibit both types of loyalty in the form of their future purchase intentions, buying patterns, and future preferences regarding the product, as their motivation and purchase behaviour is already positive towards the product (Vivek et al., 2014; Brodie et al., 2013; Kumar, 2017).

The quantitative and qualitative findings for SRQ4 supported the hypothesis that consumers' engagement was positively related to word-of-mouth, as argued in this study (see section 2.8) and answered the main research question (see Appendix 3); namely, that engagement enhances loyalty in online brand communities. The quantitative findings (see Figure 59) supported that there was a positive relationship value between engagement and word-of-mouth, as argued in SRQ4. The

relationship value between engagement and word-of-mouth is path coefficient 0.60** and correlation 0.81**, which suggests a positive relationship value. Engaged members of the online brand community on Facebook actively exercised their mental, emotional, and behavioural activities among other members. Engaged members of the online brand community on Facebook concentrated more on the brand community and the engagement objects. As a result, they spent most of their time on activities related to the brand in the brand community, which resulted in learning, the intention to learn, and endorsing behaviour. In addition, their intensity of engagement was physically, mentally, and emotionally intense and full of excitement and strongly positive emotion. Moreover, the findings suggest that consumer's engagement behaviours are manifested in positive engagement behaviour (e.g., word-of-mouth) activities. Brand community members with more mental concentration on the brand community expressed their positive attitude towards the brand both through the online brand community and offline. Such positive attitudes translated into positive comments being made in the discussions, liking, sharing, and giving feedback about the brands through the brand community. Similarly, the findings suggest that those who spend more time engaged in the brand community activities tend to recommend the brand through brand posting or by providing comments about the features and usefulness of the brand in online brand communities.

Moreover, the findings suggest that members went beyond purchasing and transactions and often wrote positive feedback and reviews, recommended products to other users, rated their experiences, and helped others with some suggestions about brand use. Also, the findings suggest that those members who liked to learn and intended to learn from the brand communities spoke positively about brand-related activities by responding to questions, getting involved in discussions about products, helping other members to choose products, and solving brand-related problems both in the online brand community and offline as well.

Likewise, the qualitative findings (see section 5.9) supported the positive relationship between engagement and word-of-mouth, as argued in SRQ4. The findings suggest that brand champions' enthusiasm, positive emotion, and engagement with the online brand community influenced consumers' internal motivation, which results in consumers' sharing and recommending behaviour. Their activities were dependent on their personal preferences and on community activities as well. Their personal motivation was positive, which was intensified further with the

help of their engagement with the brand community. The online brand community allowed them to make endorsements, provide feedback, and make comments, etc., and such activities further influenced their word-of-mouth activities with different other channels (i.e., offline).

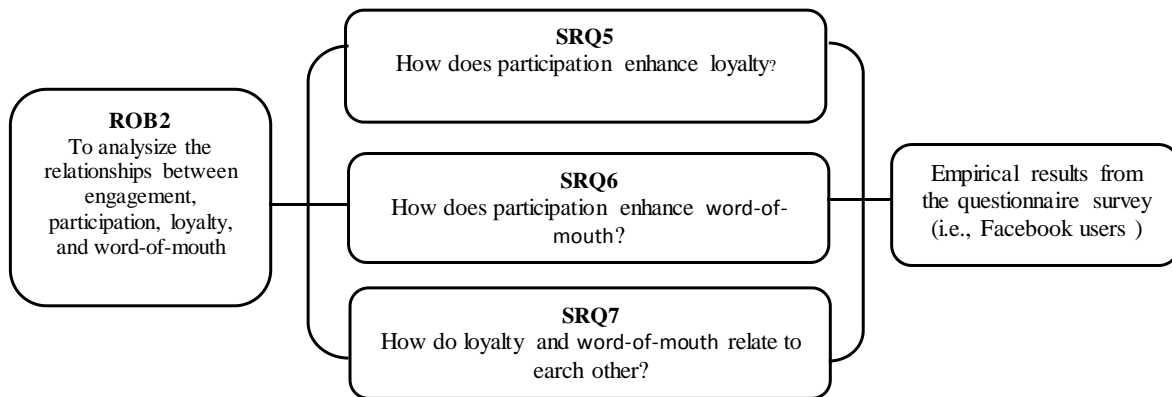
Previous research also supports the fact that consumers who have these three types of engagement characteristics possess word-of-mouth activities for the brand. Dessart et al., (2015) and Vivek et al., (2014) discuss the level of consumers' concentration and immersion with a focal engagement object. Consumer engagement among community members enhances customers' WoM intentions (S. Ray et al., 2014) and there is a positive relationship between community engagement and word-of-mouth intentions. This is indicated by the inability of members to detach themselves once they are interacting with the online brand community. Engaged customers can get involved in any product or community-related events, activities, or information, and will pay attention to the brand community's activities.

The previous study by Tuskej et al., (2011, p. 53) supports the engagement results in terms of positive word-of-mouth. In addition, consumers who have an emotional and psychological association with a brand or brand community are more likely to recommend the company to other consumers (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). Engaged customers can go beyond purchasing and transactions in the form of writing positive feedback and reviews, making recommendations to other users, and rating their experiences both online in the brand community's pages and offline, as well as by helping other members who participate in the brand community's activities to use the brand (Doorn et al., 2010). Cheung, Lee, and Jin (2011), Kumar et al., (2016), and Brodie et al., (2013) further argue that engagement makes customers endorse, advocate, share information, and learn from their interactions with, and knowledge about, the brand in an online community. Consumers who have mentally, physically, and emotionally intense connections with a brand and its products through brand communities express their vigour and emotions, as they associate themselves with the brand through the community. Consumers who engage in such activities spread positive word-of-mouth and are passionate about the brand in the form of endorsing, sharing, and informing other members in the community as well outside it (Chatterjee, 2011).

The quantitative findings for SRQ5 provided support for the fact that consumers' participation is positively related to loyalty, as argued in this study (see section 2.8.2). Hence, the findings

answered the main research question (see Appendix 3); namely, that participation enhances loyalty in online brand communities.

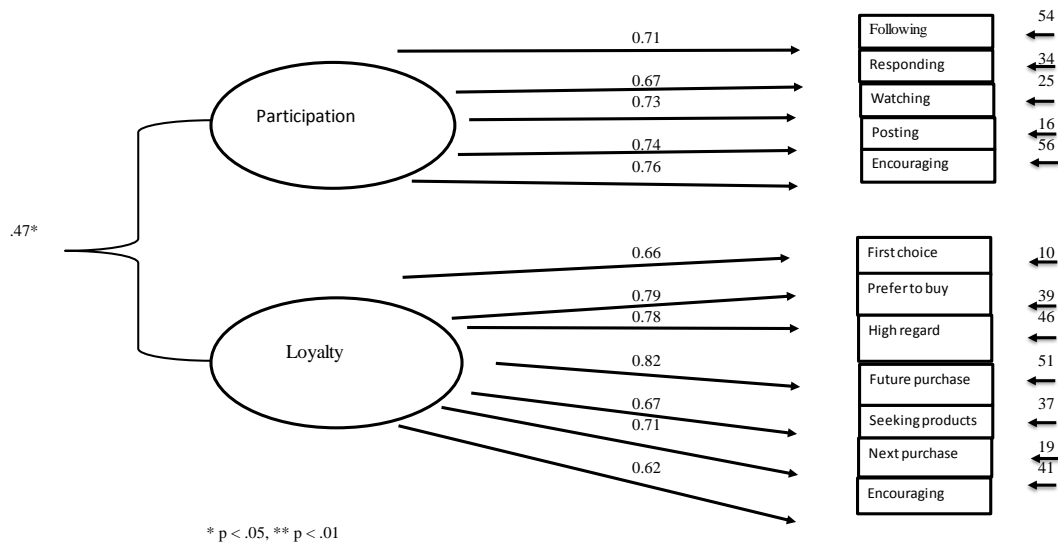
Figure 66: Analysis of SRQ5-SRQ7 from the quantitative empirical results



First, the quantitative findings (see Figure 63) support that there is a positive relationship value between participation and loyalty, as argued in SRQ5. The relationship value between participation and loyalty is path coefficient 0.19 and correlation 0.47*, which suggests a positive relationship value.

The findings supported the hypothesis, as argued in SRQ5, that members of the brand community on Facebook participated in activities such as reading comments, responding to comments, following the brand, liking their brand community member's posts, following activities and events, and participating in the active process of interacting and information-sharing. The process of frequently interacting and sharing information activated and increased members' connection with the brand community, and it eventually developed into commitment to the online brand community and, finally, resulted in increased loyalty towards the brand. Online brand community members demonstrated that their participation in the online brand community influenced their loyalty. Their contact with other Apple fans in the community allowed them to share their experiences of Apple and to interact about these frequently with interest, which established a higher involvement in the community. This eventually strengthened their public commitment and increased their loyalty towards Apple.

Figure 67: The correlation between participation and loyalty



Moreover, the empirical results from the quantitative study from showed that participation represented a certain aspect of loyalty. Also, contrary to what was argued (see section 2.8.2), the findings suggest that there is a negative relationship value for some aspects of loyalty, as not all the participation activities lead to loyalty. However, consumers who frequently interacted with, and shared information (e.g., reading and responding), in the online brand community on Facebook demonstrated increased loyalty activities (e.g., preference to use a product). At same time, the findings suggest negative buying behaviour regarding preference to buy and first choice, meaning that those who read wall posts had negative buying behaviour probably because they did not like its features or because the brand did not meet their expectations in comparison to other brands this time. In addition, consumers who read members' comments positively chose the brand, preferred to use it, bought it, searched for it in the future, and chose it for their next purchase. All these activities encouraged their loyalty. However, consumers who read members' comments could develop negative loyalty, as they didn't think that the brand had the best offers and they did not hold the brand in high regard.

Similarly, consumers who responded to comments would like to use the brand, think it has best offer at present, have high respect for the product, would buy the product next time and such activities saw an increase in their loyalty. However, consumers who responded to comments did

not make the product/brand a first choice, did not prefer to buy the product/from the brand either now or in future, and did not search for the product/brand in the future as well. Consumers who posted comments considered the brand as their first choice, preferred to buy, conducted future product searches and engaged in other such activities in the brand community increased their loyalty towards the brand, whereas posting a comment on brand community resulted in negative loyalty in terms of users' future purchases, next purchase, and not holding the product/brand in high regard. Consumers who played games in the brand community tended to be loyal in terms of the brand being their first choice, their preference to buy, future product searches and overall positive loyalty, but they did not hold the brand in high regard, did not buy in the future, and did not make the brand next purchase either.

Many joined the community but remained very critical about the brand. These types of consumers represent those who do not have a smooth communication and interaction process with the other community members. However, there is a positive outcome for those who manage to strike up a very good interaction, and process of communication, among other members: they enter into an enhanced loyalty zone, which turns participation into connection, commitment, and loyalty.

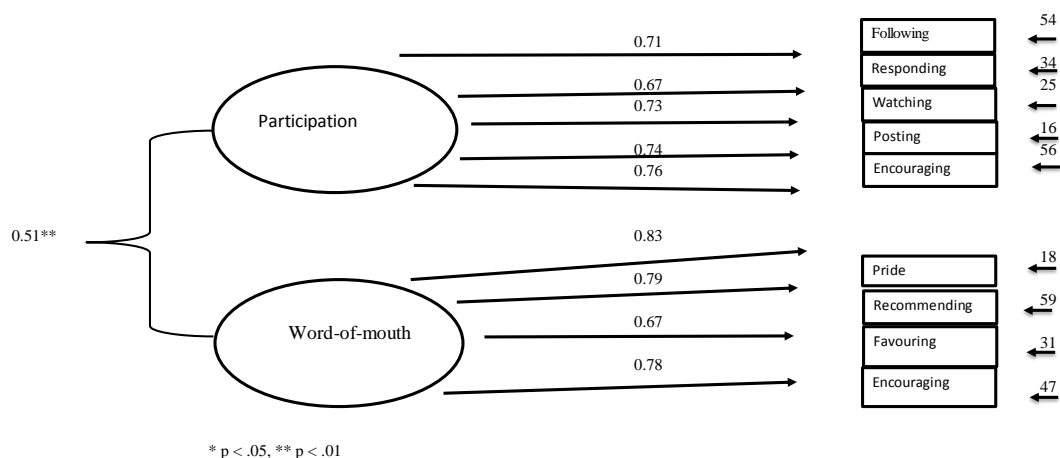
Previous research (e.g., Brodie et al., 2013; Vivek et.al. 2014; Helbeck, 2016) also supports the finding that participation influences loyalty in the sense that consumers with high levels of participation develop a connection with, and commitment to, the brand through community, which leads to loyalty. Many studies have found a positive link between participation and loyalty (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006; Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001; Zhou, 2012). They believe this is because once consumers who are brand enthusiasts participate in online platforms (e.g., social platforms or brand community platforms) with other users and other brand members, they develop an increased connection to the brand, which may lead to brand commitment and, eventually, loyalty (Casalo et al., 2007; Koh & Kim, 2004). According to self-perception theory (Bem, 1972), people observe their own behaviour and therefore determine their attitude. Participation in brand communities is performed as a form of public commitment. The members of the brand communities share intrinsic connections among member rather than with outside members, which makes them more committed to the brand and the company, and more likely to develop favourable attitudes (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). Participation in online brand communities is likely to lead the development of brand loyalty.

The quantitative findings for SRQ6 supported that consumers' participation is positively related to WoM, as argued in this study (see section 2.8.1). Hence, the findings answered the main research question (see Appendix 3); namely, that participation enhances loyalty in online brand communities.

First, the quantitative findings (see Figure 61) supported that there was a positive relationship value between participation and loyalty, as argued in SRQ6. The relationship value between participation and word-of-mouth is path coefficient 0.18 and correlation 0.42*, which suggests a positive relationship value.

The findings supported, as argued in SRQ6, that members of the brand community on Facebook participated in the community's activities (e.g., reading comments, posting comments, following members, responding to posts, tagging friends, etc.) and integrated themselves among the brand community members, which motivated them and encouraged their sense of connection. Gradually, their integration into, and attachment with, the community resulted in them being more positive towards the brand by developing strong ties among the community members. As a result, their word-of-mouth activities, such as suggesting the brand, sharing features of the brand, and recommending the brand, increased among the members and they influenced other users of other online platforms and users offline.

Figure 69: Correlation between participation and word-of-mouth



Moreover, the findings suggested that consumers' wall posting behaviour encouraged overall word-of-mouth, especially their behaviour of saying positive things about the brand, which was significant, whereas those who read wall posts in the brand community page did not feel pride or make recommendations. On the other hand, those who responded to other members' posts felt proud and spoke positively but did not make recommendations. Similarly, those who responded to comments did not make recommendations but spoke positively. However, most of them accepted that their activities in the online brand community helped to encourage their word-of-mouth.

Engaged consumers in the online brand community demonstrated that their participation in the online brand community influenced their word-of-mouth activities. Participants suggested that they were brand enthusiasts who used, loved, cared about, and admired Apple products before they joined the user generated online brand community. Their contact with other Apple fans in the community allowed them to share their experiences with Apple and to interact about Apple frequently and with interest. This established a higher involvement in the community, which eventually strengthened their connection and ties, which led to more positive word-of-mouth for Apple products than before.

The positive and informative content in wall posts encouraged consumers' positive word-of-mouth by making them say positive things about the brand but not necessarily making them feel proud or wanting to recommend the brand to others. Consumers who played games responded to, recommended, and shared positive word-of-mouth about the brand and their experiences with the brand community.

Previous research also supports the fact that customers' participation encourages them to make recommendations (i.e., word-of-mouth) (Zhou, 2012) and it is an act of participating and contributing through involvement in a certain activity, which is also termed interaction and involvement in the context of brand communities (Barki & Hartwick, 1989, 1994; Vroom & Jago, 1988). In addition, research suggests that customer participation is likely to strengthen the ties between a firm and its customers or community members and the members of a certain brand community. Individuals participating in brand communities, for example, have been shown to feel more closely integrated into the brand (Dholakia et al. 2009; Libai et al. 2010; McAlexander, Schouten & Koenig 2002; Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001; Dabholkar, 1990; Vivek, 2017). This is

proved by the evidence from the findings. As a result, active participation, such as a willingness to provide critical feedback and guidance, strengthens the links between customers and companies.

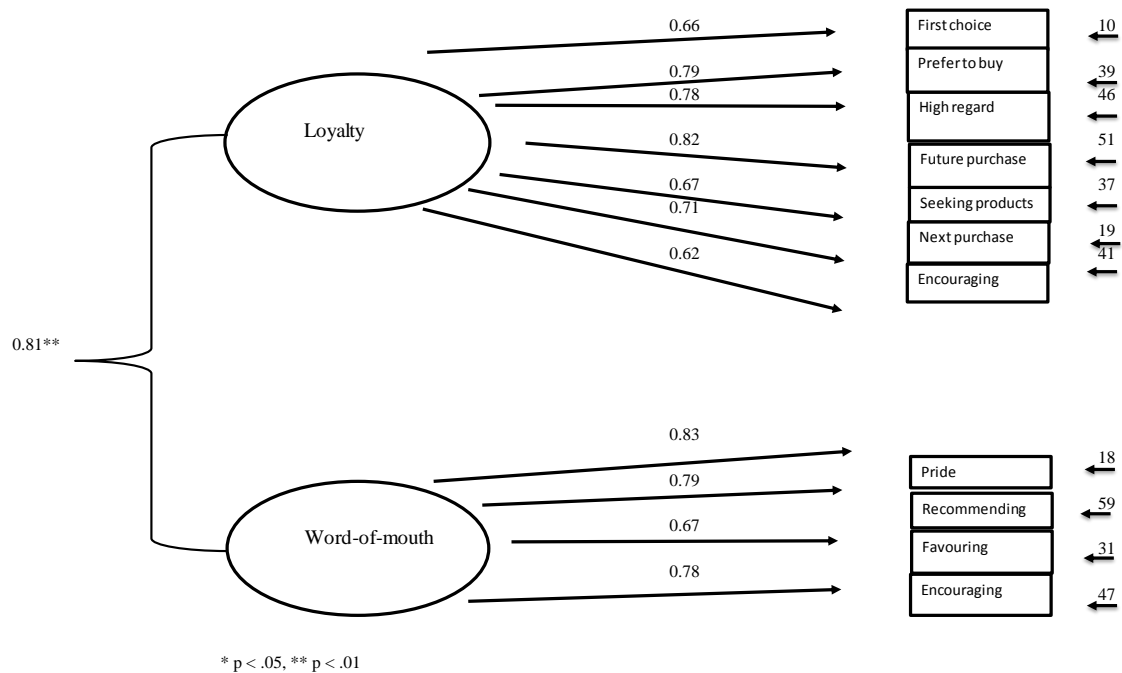
Social network theory (i.e., the study of how people, organizations, or groups interact with others inside their network) identifies customer participation as influencing word-of-mouth behaviour, which is also confirmed by various empirical studies (Richins & Bloch, 1991; Wangenheim & Bayon, 2007; Lee et al., 2011).

The quantitative findings for SRQ7 supported that consumers' loyalty and word-of-mouth positively influence each other. Hence, the findings answered the main research question (see Appendix 3); namely, that loyalty and word-of-mouth are consequences of engagement in online brand communities.

First, the quantitative findings (see Figure 62) supported that there was a positive value between loyalty and word-of-mouth, as argued in SRQ7. The relationship value between engagement and loyalty is path coefficient 0.56 and correlation 0.81**, which suggests a positive relationship value.

The findings supported, as argued in SRQ7, that loyalty and word-of-mouth are the consequences of engagement. Consumers went through a process of psychological and behavioural changes in the engagement process in the brand community on Facebook. They had already collected information about the products, services, stores, models and types of product in their interactive experiences with the members of the online brand community on Facebook. They did this in the form of asking questions, responding to posts, helping other members with the use of products, and so on and so forth. That knowledge about the brand was developed during their engagement process, which led them to share it, talk about it, recommend it, and suggest it, etc., both online and offline through word-of-mouth.

Figure 70: Correlation between loyalty and word-of-mouth



The findings showed that these two concepts overlapped. The findings suggested that engaged consumers exhibited attitudinal and behavioural loyalty as well, as they recommended and endorsed the brand. However, consumers who recommended the brand had the tendency to consider the brand as their first choice. In this sense, it is also possible that those who make recommendations have the brand their first choice as well, because engaged consumers possess these three dimensions and engagement, which can be manifested in the form of loyalty or word-of-mouth. Those who preferred to use the brand engaged in very positive word-of-mouth for the brand and those who preferred to buy had a very strong relationship with saying positive things about the brand. Those who held the brand in high regard felt very proud, and they also searched for product recommendations, made recommendations, and showed next purchase intention.

On the other hand, engaged consumers in the online brand community on Facebook developed their attitudinal and behavioural loyalty in the form of brand preferences, choice, future purchases, and next purchases. This was also determined by their engagement in the brand community. Similarly, in this context, consumers' knowledge about the brand, as gained in the brand community on Facebook, led to loyalty, and their preferences, choice of product to use, and future

purchase intention led to word-of-mouth as well. Therefore, in this sense, engagement resulted in loyalty and word-of-mouth and these relationship concepts overlapped with each other as consequences of engagement.

Previous studies also focus on how engagement results in loyalty and word-of-mouth. Brown et al. (2005) have shown that commitment to, and motivation towards, a brand or company are determining factors in the intention to spread positive WoM. With respect to consumers identifying with companies, authors like Tuskej et al., (2011) consider this variable to be an essential component of being able to promote the company to other consumers, frequently recommend a brand's products, and to make positive comments about it. Research published by Hollebeek and Chen (2014) also provided sufficient explanation of the fact that word-of-mouth is one of the consequences and a major relationship outcome of customer engagement, which is also supported by the recent research of Brodie et al., (2013) and Vivek et al., (2014). Cheung, Lee, and Jin (2011) and Kumar et al., (2016) further reinforce that engagement makes customers endorse, advocate, share information, and learn from the interactions with, and knowledge gained, about brands in an online community.

Most of the researchers explain that both the psychological and behavioural components of engagement have a higher effect on relationship outcomes (Brodie et al., 2013; Wirtz et al., 2013; Hollebeek et al., 2016). Members in the brand community share strong bonds and emotional attachment and increased enthusiasm and intrinsic motivation. They also identify more with the brand through brand community activities than those outside the community who are not fans of the brand (Dholakia & Durham, 2010; Dessart et al., 2015).

As a result, engaged consumers demonstrate both attitudinal and behavioural loyalty towards the brands they are associated with and the brand community functions as a medium by which to achieve such outcomes. Research published before the popularity of user-generated content (i.e., Web 2.0) and the engagement concept shows a positive relationship between engagement and loyalty (Algesheimer, Dholakia, & Herrmann, 2005; Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006; Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Cyr et al., 2009; Howard & Sheth, 1969; Jang et al., 2008; Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001; Shang et al., 2006; Tyebjee, 1977). In addition, research also suggests that loyalty is a key factor in achieving company success and long-term sustainability (Casalo et al., 2007; Flavian et al., 2006; Keating et al., 2003) and engagement that leads to loyalty is considered an optimal consumer behaviour for a company. Recent studies by Brodie et al., (2013), Robert and Alpert

(2010), Vivek et al., (2014), Hollebeek (2014), Hollebeek (2016), and Kumar and Pansari (2016) also state the fact that loyalty is a consequence of customer engagement.

ROB1 answers the main research question in the following way:

The three elements of consumers' engagement (i.e., affective, behavioural, cognitive) and social elements are essential to enhancing relationship outcomes, such as loyalty and word-of-mouth in online brand communities. Engaged consumers possess a higher level of affective, behavioural, cognitive, and social characteristics during and after their interactions with the brand community, which leads to positive relationship results in the form of loyalty and word-of-mouth. Engaged consumers contribute most of their physical, mental, behavioural, and social characteristics to brand community's activities. Engaged consumers spend most of their time and efforts in the online brand community and contribute most of their time to commenting, responding, liking, questioning, making suggestions, attending events and activities, and social interactions, such as community meet ups and taking part in conference calls. These encourage their brand loyalty and word-of-mouth as the users are mentally, physically, and socially involved with the brand through the online brand community.

As a result of being a part of community, characteristics such as emotional attachment, group identification, and commitment to being a member of the group, etc., were significant, as, when users interacted with and shared their brand-related experiences among the community members, they were involved with the community's characteristics. This led them to engage more and more. In the process, they contributed most of their time and efforts to the group's activities, and took part in events, group calls, and meet ups. They also provided tips to other members, became involved in brand-related discussions, or any activities associated with their mental and physical strength (i.e., vigour), and expressed excitement. They identified brand activities as being a collective goal, which attracted their attention more and drew them more to the community's activities, such as sharing information, buying products, making commitments, giving feedback, endorsing the brand, and other brand-related activities. This ultimately encouraged, or enhanced, their loyalty and word-of-mouth activities.

Additionally, in the context of online brand communities and consumer driven brand communities, the social components of engagement played a significant role and contributed to the component

of engagement. Members of the brand community developed relationships based on their attachment to the community, as they shared the same feelings for the community's values, morals, and activities, and felt a commitment to, and sense of interconnectedness with, the group members during brand-related activities. Hence, community characteristics had a significant role to play in developing the consumers' engagement and influencing loyalty and word-of-mouth.

ROB2 answers the main research question in the following way:

SRQ2 answered the main research question in the sense that it distinguished between participation and engagement and, at the same time, explored participation as one of the elements of engagement by adding new dimensions, such as involvement, from the results of the qualitative study. The new findings suggested that participation is the combination of behavioural (i.e., information-sharing and interaction) components in online brand communities. This is important because participation precedes engagement and participation is important for relationship outcomes, such as loyalty and word-of-mouth. This is because participation functions as a low-level form of engagement that has only some components of engagement. Hence, it is important that engagement and participation are not used interchangeably. Engagement, as discussed before, is a multidimensional concept, whereas participation exhibits a lower level of the behavioural and cognitive elements of engagement. Hence, SRQ2 answered the main research question as it differentiated between participation and engagement and explored how participation encouraged engagement, which ultimately leads to loyalty and word-of-mouth.

SRQ3 answered the main research question by showing that consumer engagement has a positive relationship with loyalty. In addition, the empirical results suggested the higher effect of the engagement and loyalty relationship than the relationship between participation and loyalty. Engaged consumers in the brand community on Facebook actively enjoyed and shared their experiences through different activities, such as discussions on posts, sharing videos and posts, sharing product solutions and event information, and sharing news about new events, product use, product functions, and uses, etc., in the online brand community. They became mentally, physically, psychologically, and socially associated with the brand community. High involvement and connection with the community led to high engagement with the brand as well. In other words, consumers who collected information about products and who liked to gather information, and

those who enjoyed using the products, associated themselves with the products, spoke positively about the products, talked on and on about the products, spent most of their time with the products, and expressed their excitement and were highly positive about the product, strengthened their preferences for the product. Consumer engagement in the online brand community was manifested in these forms; namely, as affective, cognitive, and behavioural elements, and they influenced attitudinal and behavioural loyalty. The results of this study show that consumers with affective engagement, such as intense experiences (e.g., excitement, vigour) exhibited both types of loyalty as they preferred to use (i.e., attitude) and preferred to buy (i.e., behaviour) products from the brand whose community they were associated with.

Cognitive engagement, such as attention and absorption, led to behavioural and attitudinal loyalty. Engaged consumers in the brand community lost track of time as they were involved with the brand activities in such a way that they were mentally engaged with the brand community's activities on Facebook. They spent so much of their time in the brand community on Facebook among other members, which encouraged their loyalty to increase more than it would have done in those outside the community, which resulted in both behaviour and attitudinal loyalty. Consumers who devoted their whole attention to the community's activities tended to fall into the "prefer to buy" category, which is behavioural loyalty, and "prefer to use", which is attitudinal loyalty. Likewise, cognitive engagement (i.e., absorption), where consumers in the online brand community lost track of time tended to search for future products, demonstrated behavioural loyalty. Engaged consumers liked to learn and this is related to holding a brand in high regard, which is attitudinal loyalty, and future purchase intentions, which is behavioural loyalty.

SRQ4 also answered the main research question by showing that consumer engagement has a positive relationship with WoM. In addition, the empirical results suggested the higher effect of the engagement and word-of-mouth relationship in comparison with the relationship between participation and word-of-mouth. Engaged consumers concentrated more on the online brand community. Engaged consumers' level of engagement towards the engagement objects was highly active, as they spent most of their time on activities related to the focal object, which resulted in learning, intention to learn, and endorsing behaviour. In addition, their intensity of engagement was physically and mentally intense, and full of vigour, passion, and excitement for the engagement object as well. This collection of likeminded people felt that the group's activities were their own because of the responsibility, history, and passion they shared together. Hence, in

such an environment, members' engagement with the community was such that members engaged with their peers irrespective of time, place, and situation. They also exhibited positive human feelings, emotions, thoughts, and behaviour in the form of interaction, involvement, and sharing experiences about the brand in such communities. This happened in the form of sharing information, such as providing positive feedback, advocating, and endorsing the brand, and sharing knowledge about the brand in the form of word-of-mouth among members both online and offline. Their active engagement in the brand community enhanced members' positive participation behaviour in the form of recommending, endorsing, giving feedback, commenting, and interacting, which resulted from being engaged in the brand community.

Likewise, SRQ5 also answered the main research question and showed that consumer participation has a positive relationship with loyalty. In addition, the empirical results suggested the lower effect of the participation and loyalty relationship in comparison with the relationship between engagement and loyalty. This study also investigated the relationship between participation and loyalty as well. Participation contains some behavioural elements of engagement and it helps initiate engagement process. In this sense, it is important to justify its relationship with loyalty even though the direct relationship of participation with loyalty is less effective than that between engagement and loyalty.

Consumers' active participation means that they like to read comments, respond to comments, watch videos and play games, like their brand community members' posts, and follow the community's activities and events; they thereby find themselves in the active process of interacting and information-sharing. This process of interacting and information-sharing activates and increases their mental and physical level of involvement with the brand community. Consumers who frequently read wall posts and respond to members' posts tend to look for the best offer, develop high regard for the brand, and engage in future product searches. Hence, brand-related participation with the online brand community results in increased loyalty for the brand. In addition, as these community members are people with similar interests and goals, they develop a connection among each other, which develops into brand commitment among the members and, finally, results in increased loyalty.

SRQ6 answered the main research question by showing that consumer participation has a positive relationship with WoM. In addition, the empirical results suggested the lower positive effect of the

word-of-mouth and loyalty relationship in comparison with the relationship between word-of-mouth and loyalty. This study also investigated the relationship between participation and WoM as well. The relationship of participation with WoM is significant because the relationship is not as strong as that between engagement and word-of-mouth because participation only carries one element of engagement. Hence, the indirect relationship between participation and word mouth is not as effective as the relationship that engagement has with word-of-mouth. However, it is important to relate this finding to the main research question so that the relationship effects of participation with loyalty and engagement with loyalty can be explained.

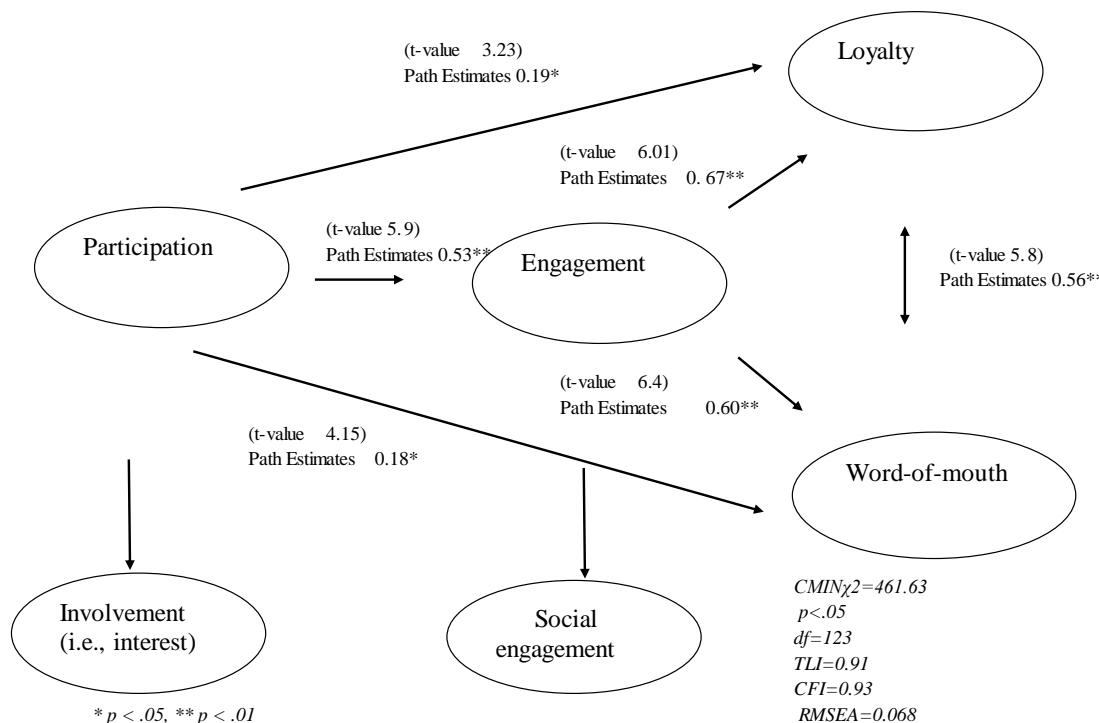
Active consumers read posts, post comments, respond to comments, watch videos and play games, and engage in other activities in the brand community page on Facebook, which motivates them and encourages their feelings of connection with other members. In addition, they integrate and attach themselves to the community more and more in the process. They contribute and connect, which results in higher levels of involvement towards the brand and, ultimately, their word-of-mouth activities, such as suggesting the brand, sharing features of the brand, and recommending the brand, increase. This happens on both online platforms and offline, thus influencing other users of brands, which strengthens the ties between a firm and its customers or those between community members and other members.

SRQ7 also answered the main research question by showing that consumer loyalty and word-of-mouth are related to each other. In addition, the empirical results suggested the higher effect of loyalty and word-of-mouth relationship (see Figure 70). Engaged consumers showed that they went through a process by which they transformed themselves into a level of engagement where their brand-related activities were manifested in making product choices, giving recommendations, or other types of activities. Those who were already engaged went through a process of psychological and behavioural changes in the engagement process in the brand community. These consumers collected information about products, services, stores, and models in their interactive experiences with the members of the online brand community on Facebook. By asking questions, responding to posts, helping other members about the use of products, and so on and so forth, their knowledge about the brand developed during the engagement process, which led them to share information, talk about, recommend, and suggest the brand, etc., both online and offline through word-of-mouth. Engaged consumers in this context developed their attitudinal and behavioural

loyalty in the form of brand preferences, choice, future purchase intention, and next purchases. Engaged consumers preferred to use the product more and more, their future choice of product become positive, they had brand preferences, and their next purchase also became positive because of their engagement with the brand community. Hence, they had increased attitudinal and behavioural loyalty. On the other hand, consumers' knowledge about the brand led to loyalty and them having preferences regarding the choice of product to buy in future, and so on, which could lead to word-of-mouth as well.

Therefore, in this sense, engagement can lead to loyalty or word-of-mouth, and these relationship concepts overlap with each other as consequences of engagement. However, most of the previous studies often related engagement to loyalty. However, the findings of this study suggest that WoM is as important as loyalty as a relationship outcome, when it takes the form of feedback, making recommendations, and sharing information, etc.

Figure 71: Theoretical model test of the empirical results from the quantitative and qualitative studies



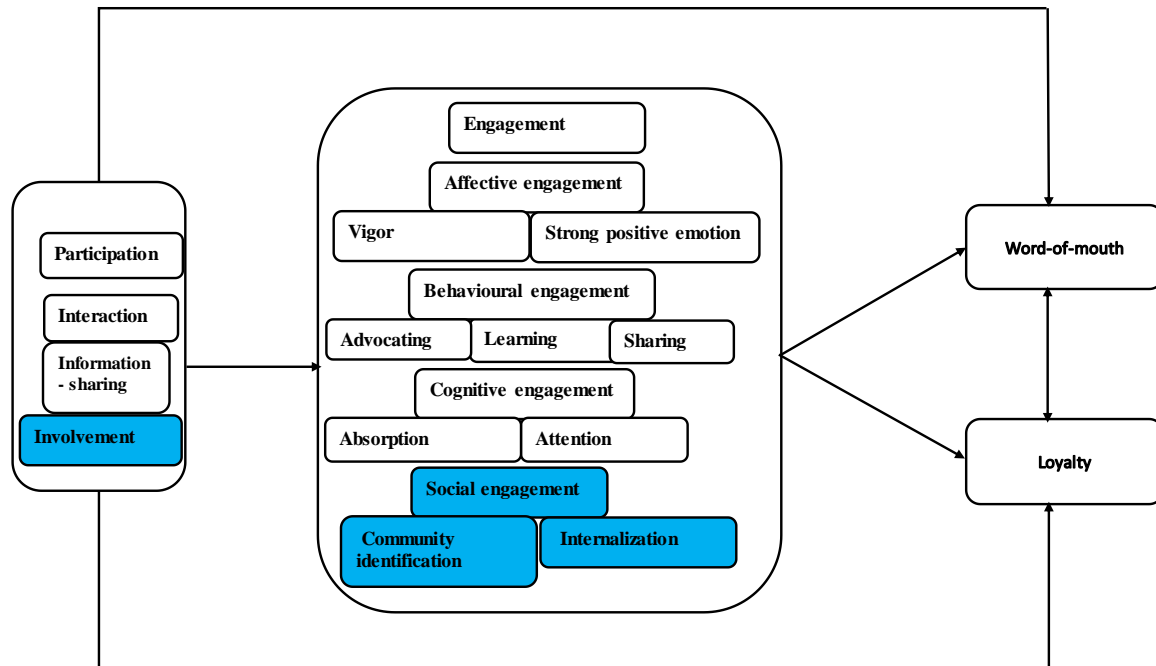
Source: Empirical results from the quantitative and qualitative studies in this thesis

The empirical results and analysis from both the quantitative and qualitative studies supported the argued theoretical model, as well as providing some new dimensions (see Figure 73). The empirical results of the qualitative interview supported that engagement combines three main characteristics (i.e., affective, behavioural and cognitive) characteristics in user generated online brand communities. In addition, the result adds a social characteristic of engagement in the online brand community context, which is influenced by the relationships developed in this social environment with other community members and identification with community characteristics (e.g., identification with the community's self, collective goals, values, etc.). This plays an important role in enhancing loyalty and word-of-mouth. Moreover, in this study, participation is argued as being a behavioural manifestation in consumer activities in the form of information-sharing and interacting. In addition, this study adds involvement (i.e., interest) as a new dimension of consumer participation, because active participation in the online brand community activates users' interest in the brand community, making them involved in the community's activities and moving them into the engagement process.

The quantitative study, which analysed the empirical results from the Facebook users, helped to confirm the positive relationships between participation, engagement, loyalty, and word-of-mouth, thus supporting the hypotheses stated in theoretical model. The qualitative study, which analysed the empirical results from the user generated online brand community users on Facebook, supported this argument and recommended new characterises of participation and engagement.

In addition, this study provided details of the direct and indirect influences, and consequences of participation and engagement, on loyalty and word-of-mouth. The empirical results of the quantitative study showed participation as being one dimensional (i.e., behavioural), where the direct influence of consumer participation resulted in a lower increase in loyalty and word-of-mouth than the mediated relationship between participation and engagement. However, the qualitative study added involvement to participation and a social element to engagement as added to the dimensions of engagement. This is an area for future research.

Figure 72: New conceptual model of consumer engagement from this study.



Source: Author's representation from the new findings

6.3 Summary

This chapter has focused on two aspects of the study: the integration of empirical results (SRQ2-4) and discussion (SRQ1-7) of the results. It answers the main research question by showing that engagement is a multidimensional concept and that, in the online brand community environment, the social characteristics of engagement are equally important. In the first section, the quantitative and qualitative empirical data was integrated for SRQ2-4.

In the next section, the qualitative results (SRQ1) were discussed with the new findings in terms of the social dimension of engagement and involvement. The quantitative and qualitative empirical results for SRQ2-4 were then discussed, adding a new dimension to participation and, thereafter, the quantitative empirical results for SRQ2-4 were discussed. In addition, the main research question was answered by adding new findings and developing the theoretical model into a new conceptual model. The two objectives for this study (see Appendix 3) answered the main research

question (see Appendix 3). The first, ROB1 was addressed by SRQ1, using the empirical results from the qualitative study and, finally, answered the main research question by adding a social element to engagement.

The second objective (ROB2) was addressed through SRQ2-4 using the empirical results from the quantitative and qualitative studies and, finally, answered the main research question. In addition, SRQ2 added new empirical findings from the qualitative study to participation, such as involvement (i.e., interest). The sub research questions (SRQ5-7) were addressed in relation to ROB2 by using the empirical results from the quantitative study and, finally, by answering the main research question.

The research objectives were addressed in seven sub-research questions, which then answered the main research question by showing that there was a positive relationship between participation, engagement, loyalty, and word-of-mouth. Participation worked as an antecedent of engagement, whereas loyalty and word-of-mouth were the consequences of that relationship. Moreover, the direct influence of participation on loyalty and word-of-mouth was less influential than the engagement-mediated influence on loyalty and word-of-mouth.

The next chapter, which is also the final chapter of this study, will discuss the research contribution (i.e., academic, marketing, and methodological) made by this study, its limitations, and the future research directions from this study.

Chapter 7

7.1 Conclusion

As discussed in the introduction (see section 1.2), consumers' adoption rate of social media has surged in the recent past. Social networking sites have become a popular medium for interactions between consumers, and marketers have adopted these mediums to engage with their consumers on such virtual platforms. The growing interest of academics and marketers on engagement elements and their relationship with other concepts in online brand communities on Facebook has been given a lot of attention. This study investigates the dimensions of engagement and participation and how they influence loyalty and word-of-mouth in user generated online brand communities. This study gathers information on engagement from different disciplines, such as psychology, education, information technology, sociology, and so on. It also focuses on its dimensions from a relationship marketing perspective and empirically presents the findings by using both quantitative and qualitative approaches to explore the role played by the engagement concept in relation to other concepts, such as participation, loyalty, and word-of-mouth.

A multidimensional concept of engagement has been adopted for this study after the researcher went through many theoretical suggestions that surfaced in the literature. Accordingly, engagement consists of three main elements or dimensions; namely, affective, behavioural and cognitive. Affective elements need vigour (e.g., excitement, passion) and identity (e.g., motivation) to develop emotional bonds and connections with the focal object (i.e., a brand or brand community), which can then lead to loyalty and word-of-mouth. Similarly, behavioural elements need consumers' investment in sharing, advocating for, and learning with the engagement objects, whereas cognitive engagement needs mental intensity, focus, concentration, and intention to seek, use, analyse, etc., the engagement object. This leads users to get into the engagement process and find themselves losing time, space, and themselves in brand-/brand community- related activities. In addition, this study added a new engagement dimension (i.e., social). Community markers, such as members' identification and internalization, were found to be very important in addition to the other three components of consumer engagement.

The findings of this study, in relation to the dimensions of engagement, add to a better understanding of the dimensions of engagement in user generated online brand communities. The

concept of engagement has been studied before in different disciplines; however, it has been understudied in relation to engagement focus in user generated online brand communities.

This study provides a firm theoretical background for the concept of engagement using both quantitative and qualitative approaches, which were used to investigate the engagement dimensions in the virtual user generated online brand community environment. In addition, this study adds a new dimension in the form of a social element, as user generated online line brand community engagement is peer driven and administered independently. The social elements of peer engagement, such as event sharing, sharing the group's feelings, culture, language, and morals are important in shaping the engagement relationship in such an environment.

7.1.2 The academic contribution of this study

The first contribution of this study to the literature lies in the fact that the three dimensions (i.e., affective, cognitive, and behavioural) in the brand community context have been empirically validated using the quantitative and qualitative results.

The literature on consumer engagement in the context of online brand communities on social networks needed further exploration and empirical evidence. The extant literature presents several conceptual frameworks of the engagement model for online brand communities on social networks, but their empirical validity is under question (Doorn et al. 2010; Verhoef, Reinartz, & Kraft 2010; Gummerus et al. 2012; Kumar et al., 2016). In addition, previous research on consumer engagement in online brand communities is under-researched (Brodie et al., 2013; Wirtz et al 2013; Hollebeek et al 2016; Vivek et al., 2014). The findings of this study contribute to the existing online brand community literature (Brodie et al., 2013; Islam & Rahman, 2016; Baldus et al., 2015; Dessart et al., 2015; Martinez Lopez et al., 2017; Hollebeek et al., 2017; Wua et al., 2017).

This research presents evidence from the quantitative and qualitative studies to further justify the engagement process in online brand communities and its interrelationship with other relationship constructs and the outcomes of such relationships, such as participation, loyalty, and word-of-mouth. This study proves that participation functions as an antecedent to consumer engagement, which reinforces the consequences of this relationship and leads to loyalty and word-of-mouth. Hence, this study uses empirical evidence to justify the fact that consumer engagement influences

users by performing a very significant role in driving loyalty and word-of-mouth in online brand communities.

The study also aimed to carry out a detailed exploration of the relationships between engagement and other relational constructs as engagement, participation, loyalty, and word-of-mouth. This study contributes to the relationship-marketing paradigm by exploring the interrelationships and differences among each of the constructs; namely, engagement, participation, loyalty, and word-of-mouth, in online brand communities. Consumer engagement in this sense provides, in contrast, a broader dimensional scope by which to understand online brand community engagement by integrating the affective, cognitive, and behavioural dimensions.

The findings of this study contribute, from the academic perspective, to explaining the distinction between two relationship constructs; namely, participation and engagement. It also contributes to existing knowledge about participation and its relationship with engagement in the sense that it differentiates these two concepts. Participation and engagement are not in their mature stage and both the terms are used interchangeably (Dessart et al., 2015). This research identifies clear differences in these concepts in terms of when the level of consumers' involvement and experience can lead to engagement. In this sense, participation precedes engagement and functions as a trigger for engagement. Engagement functions as a multidimensional concept in the relationship. Participation, on the other hand, tends to focus more on the behavioural element of engagement and on a single dimension of engagement. Likewise, loyalty and word-of-mouth function as the relationship outcomes of participation and engagement. This research differentiates the intensity of the consequences of participation and engagement. Participation has a less effective consequence in the form of loyalty and word-of-mouth, but the mediated relationship of engagement has higher consequences, in terms of loyalty and word-of-mouth.

In addition, from an academic perspective, these findings broaden the knowledge base regarding brand community consumer engagement, given that few researchers have justified the consequences of engagement. This contribution is significant in that several researchers have examined what engagement is, rather than focusing on the consequences using qualitative and quantitative data. This study suggests that loyalty and word-of-mouth are some of the consequences of consumer engagement in online brand communities.

7.1.3 The marketing contribution of this study

Marketers must focus on those consumers who are outside their networks and who run their own networks through brand communities generated by themselves. However, these users contribute to positive business outcomes for the brand even though they are outside the brands' focus. The main lesson for marketers that is derived from this research is that marketers should pay attention to consumers who independently enhance the value of a brand without marketers being aware of it.

From a marketer's perspective, the new understanding of how vigour, strong positive emotion, attention, absorption, and sharing and learning influence consumer engagement suggests that marketers should concentrate on the type of information presented as well as the format in which the information is presented. Marketers need to create not only timely and accurate information, but also relevant information that evokes attention, pleasure, and creates emotional ties between community members and the brand's consumers. In addition, engagement on social networking sites, and especially in user negated online brand communities, needs to be closely observed in terms of how consumers engage in brand-related activities through online brand communities. Community markers, such as feelings, emotions, excitement, contribution, and interaction with peers contribute significantly in engaging users with the brand community and the brand itself.

The contribution of this study, in terms of marketing literature, comes as a result of it showing that consumer engagement in user generated online brand communities is rarely researched or studied by marketers, as marketers focus on online brands that are community-initiated and governed by them. This study, in this sense, is original and empirically validates the consumer engagement relationship outcome in the user generated environment. No other study has used both quantitative and qualitative studies to empirically investigate the influence of engagement on loyalty and word-of-mouth.

This study suggests to marketers that user generated online brand communities should be set up by enthusiasts of their brand because their love for the brand can influence other brand lovers, users, fans, and enthusiasts by maintaining personal and professional relationships. As the population of brand enthusiasts is growing, and because they are looking to share their feelings with brand users, companies must develop content that provides brand enthusiasts with accurate information on time and which motivates them to be engaged with fellow brand users through

online brand communities. These brand enthusiasts in user generated online brand communities may become more loyal and encourage and influence each other to become advocates for the company/brand by sharing information, making recommendations, and helping others, which is instrumental for brands' future success.

This study also suggests that consumer participation in online brand communities is crucial because participation can determine their level of engagement. Therefore, it is important for marketers to observe the activities of consumers in user generated online brand communities and to motivate consumers to journey from participation to active engagement. In other words, they must encourage users to move from being brand enthusiasts to being brand champions. This is what the engagement process is in user generated online brand communities and this is crucial for marketers.

Marketers must understand the fact that consumers' engagement journey starts with participatory activities and that engagement and participation must be analysed relating to each other. However, these concepts cannot be used interchangeably, as these concepts are different in nature and contribute differently to business outcomes in the social environment. Marketers must understand the differences between participation and engagement. So far, these two terms have been used interchangeably. Understanding these concepts is essential because the study shows that consumers' participation (e.g., liking, sharing, commenting, giving feedback) does not guarantee engagement. Marketers must encourage and motivate members of online brand communities with quality information-sharing, such as by asking relevant brand-related questions, providing answers, and considering the language used in replies and the time taken to respond to the members' questions, etc., which can lead to positive feelings being directed towards the brand by members of the community. Positive experiences among the brand community members about the brand can thus develop into a high level of involvement and, later, into engagement.

Finally, it is important for marketers not to understand engagement as being a unidimensional concept, like participation, which they did in the past (Evans & McKee, 2010). Today, as discussed in this study, engagement is about all the three aspects of human activities; hand, heart, and head (e.g., behaviour, emotional, and psychological). Marketers must realize that these aspects of human engagement dimensions exist in user generated brand communities and use these to help them to measure their engagement efforts.

7.2.1 Limitations and Future Research

This study sheds light on various aspects that are instrumental for academics and marketers but, at the same time, special attention has been taken while analysing the results because of some limitations of the study.

First, the use of the snowball technique sampling method may produce bias in the data because of the nature of the sample. The sample was constituted from a participant population that follows brand communities on Facebook, after the researcher shared a survey link with personal contacts and the groups he himself followed or was involved with. This may limit the sample's ability to represent the whole population. Future research can focus on the other ways of gathering data, such as by using various other Facebook brand communities to share the link and paying for Facebook ads to identify the participants of brand communities and distribute the survey link, which may better represent the sample population.

Second, the research focus on engagement in this research is on manufactured goods and, therefore, consumer good brand communities on Facebook were the focus of study. However, future research may target brand communities in the service industry, instead of consumer goods or manufacturing, and brand communities on other social media platforms of research interest, such as Twitter. Hence, consumer online brand community behaviour may be different in brand communities associated with other industries such as service and non-profit organizations.

Third, the study focuses on online consumer engagement with brand communities on Facebook. Social media adoption is growing rapidly, and companies are using other platforms and channels to engage with consumers. Hence, future research may use this model to test online brand communities on YouTube, Twitter, Pinterest, etc., and observe whether the antecedents of engagement and their consequences are similar or different from those in brand communities on Facebook.

Fourth, this study focuses on user generated brand communities on Facebook. Future studies may focus on company-generated brand communities where consumers are engaged with the brand communities of firms and brands, rather than those that are user generated and user controlled.

Fifth, this study is targeted at nonspecific professions and studies a diverse group of customers. Future research could target some specific groups, such as students. Future research may also consider the negative effects of customer engagement (Hollebeek & Chen, 2014; Vivek et al.,

2014). Further research is needed on the various types of brand communities to understand and empirically investigate the similar, as well as different, relationships in customer engagement.

Sixth, this study has found that participation has a new dimension in the form of involvement (i.e., interest) and that engagement has new social dimension, both of which need further research.

Seventh, this research examines a relationship-oriented user generated brand community. However, there are other communities as well, such as interest- and transaction-oriented communities; therefore, future research could focus on such types of brand community.

References

- Achterberg, W., Pot, A., Kerkstra, A., Ooms, M., Muller, M., & Ribbe, M. (2003). The effect of depression on social engagement in newly admitted Dutch nursing home residents. *The Gerontologist*, 43(2), 213-218.
- Advertising Research Foundation (ARF). (2006). (Accessed on March 2016).
- Ahonen, T.T., and Moore, A. (2006). Communities dominate brands. London: Future text.
- Aichner, T., & Jacob, F. (2015). Measuring the degree of corporate social media use. *International Journal of Market Research*, 57(2), 257e275.
- Algesheimer, R., Dholakia, U. M., & Herrmann, A. (2005). The social influence of brand community: Evidence from European car clubs. *Journal of marketing*, 69(3), 19-34.
- Andersen, P. H. (2005). Relationship marketing and brand involvement of professionals through Web-enhanced brand communities: The case of Coloplast. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 34(1), 39–51.
- Anderson, Benedict. (1991), *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London: Verso, revised edition.
- Anderson, E. W. 1998. Customer satisfaction and word of mouth. *Journal of Service Research* 1 (1):5–17.doi:10.1177/109467059800100102.
- Andriof, J., Waddock, S., Husted, B., & Rahman, S. S. (2017). *Unfolding stakeholder thinking; theory, responsibility and engagement*. Routledge.
- Arksey, H. and Knight, P. (1999). *Interviewing for Social Scientists: An Introductory Resource with Examples*, London: Sage Publications.
- As Social Media Matures, Branded Communities Will Make a Comeback In 2015. (2014). [ONLINE] Available at: <https://go.forrester.com/blogs/14-11-10>. [Accessed 11 April 2016].

- Ashley, C., Noble, S. M., Donthu, N., & Lemon, K. N. (2011). Why customers will not relate Obstacles to relationship marketing engagement. *Journal of Business Research*, 64(7), 749-756.
- B.J. Calder, E.C. Malthouse, U. Schaedel. An experimental study of the relationship between online engagement and advertising effectiveness *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 23 (4) (2009), pp. 321-331.
- Bagozzi and Utpal M. Dholakia (2006), "Antecedents and Purchase Consequences of Customer Participation in Small Group Brand Communities," *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 23 (1), 45–61.
- Bagozzi, R. P., & Dholakia, U. M. (2002). International social action in virtual communities. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 16(2), 2–21.
- Baldus, B. J., Voorhees, C., & Calantone, R. (2015). Online brand community engagement: Scale development and validation. *Journal of Business Research*, 68(5), 978–985.doi: 10.1016/j.jbusres.2014.09.035.
- Baldus, Brian J., Clay Voorhees, and Roger Calantone (2014). "Online brand community engagement: Scale development and validation." *Journal of Business Research* 68.5 (2015): 978-985.
- Baltar, F., & Brunet, I. (2012). Social research 2.0: virtual snowball sampling method using Facebook. *Internet Research*, 22(1), 57-74.
- Barkholz, D., & Rehtin, M. (2012, May 21). Net worth: GM's paid-ad pullback highlights key question for automakers: Can Facebook sell cars? *Automot News* (1 & 42).
- Barreda, A. A., Bilgihan, A., Nusair, K., & Okumus, F. (2015). Generating brand awareness in online social networks. *Computers in human behaviour*, 50, 600-609.
- Beatty, S. E., and M. S. Scott. 1987. External search effort: An investigation across several product categories. *Journal of Consumer Research* 14 (1):83–95. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2489245>.

- Bendapudi, Neeli and Robert P. Leone (2003), “Psychological Implications of Customer Participation in Co-Production,” *Journal of Marketing*, 67 (January), 14-28.
- Berger, S. C., & Messerschmidt, C. M. (2009). Babbling before banking. Online communities and pre-purchase information seeking. *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, 27(6), 446–466.
- Bernard, H. R. (2002). *Research methods in anthropology: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (3rd Ed.). Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press.
- Bernard, H. R., 2006. *Research methods in anthropology: qualitative and quantitative approaches*. 4th edition. Oxford: Altamira.
- Biernacki, P., & Waldorf, D. (1981). Snowball sampling: Problem and techniques of chain referral sampling. *Sociological Methods and Research* 10(2), 141–163.
- Biernacki, P., & Waldorf, D. (1981). Snowball sampling: Problem and techniques of chain referral sampling. *Sociological Methods and Research* 10(2), 141–163.
- Biernacki, P., & Waldorf, D. (1981). Snowball sampling: Problem and techniques of chain referral sampling. *Sociological Methods and Research* 10(2), 141–163.
- Bijmolt, T. H. A., Leeflang, P. S. H., Block, F., Eisenbeiss, M., Hardie, B. G. S., Lemmens, A., & Saffert, P. (2010). Analytics for customer engagement. *Journal of Service Research*, 13(3), 341–356.doi:10.1177/1094670510375603.
- Bolton, R. N. 2011. Customer engagement: Opportunities and challenges for organizations. *Journal of Service Research* 14 (3):272–74.doi: 10.1177/1094670511414582.
- Bolton, Ruth N. and Shruti Saxena-Iyer (2009), “Interactive Services: A Framework, Synthesis and Research Directions,” *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 23, 1, 91–104.
- Bone, F. 1995. Word-of-mouth effects on short-term and long-term product judgments. *Journal of Business Research* 32 (3):213–23.doi:10.1016/0148-2963 (94)00047-I.

- Boomsma A. Robustness of LISREL against small sample sizes in factor analysis models. In: Joreskog KG, Wold H, editors. *Systems under indirection observation: Causality, structure, prediction (Part I)* Amsterdam, Netherlands: North Holland; 1982. pp. 149–173.
- Bostrom, R. (1998). *Communication research*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press.
- Boszormenyi-Nagy, Ivan, and Spark, Geraldine. (1984), *Invisible Loyalties: Reciprocity in Intergenerational Family Therapy*, New York: Brunner/Mazel.
- Bowden, J.L.H. (2009), “The process of consumer engagement: a conceptual framework”, *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, Vol. 17 No. 1, pp. 63-74.
- Bowen, Gordon, and Wilson Ozuem. "Computer-Mediated Marketing Strategies: Social Media and Online Brand." (2015).
- Boyatzis, R. E. (1998). *Transforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis and code development*. Sage.
- Braojos, J., Benitez, J., & Llorens-Montes, F. J. (2017). Contemporary Micro-IT Capabilities and Organizational Performance: The Role of Online Customer Engagement.
- Braun V. & Clarke V., 2006. Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, pp.77-101.
- Brodie, R. J., A. Ilic, B. Juric, and L. D. Hollebeek. 2013. Customer engagement in a virtual brand community: An exploratory analysis. *Journal of Business Research* 66: 105–104. Doi: 10.1016/j.jbusres.2011.07.029.
- Brodie, R. J., Hollebeek, L. D., Juric, B., & Ilic, A. (2011). Customer engagement: Conceptual domain, fundamental propositions, and implications for research. *Journal of Service Research*, 14(3), 252–271.doi: 10.1177/1094670511411703.
- Brodie, R. J., Ilic, A., Juric, B., & Hollebeek, L. (2013). Consumer engagement in a virtual brand Community: An exploratory analysis. *Journal of Business Research*, 66(1), 105–114.

- Brodie, R. J., Ilic, A., Juric, B., & Hollebeek, L. (2013). Consumer engagement in a virtual brand community: An exploratory analysis. *Journal of Business Research*, 66(1), 105-114.
- Brodie, Roderick J., et al. "Consumer engagement in a virtual brand community: An exploratory analysis." *Journal of Business Research* 66.1 (2013): 105-114.
- Brogi, S. (2014). Online brand communities: a literature review. *Procedia-Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 109, 385-389.
- Bryman, A. (2004). *Social Research Methods*, 2nd Edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bryman, A. (2015). *Social research methods*. Oxford university press.
- Burgess- Allen, J., & Owen- Smith, V. (2010). Using mind-mapping techniques for rapid qualitative data analysis in public participation processes. *Health Expectations*, 13(4), 406-415.
- Buttle, F. (Ed.). (1996). *Relationship marketing: theory and practice*. Sage.
- Byron, Brian. (1972), *Loyalty in the Spirituality of St. Thomas Moore*, Nieuwkoop: B. De Cambridge, MA.
- Calder, B. J., Isaac, M. S., & Malthouse, E. C. (2013). Taking the customer's point-of-view: engagement or satisfaction?
- Calder, B. J., Malthouse, E. C., & Maslowska, E. (2016). Brand marketing, big data and social innovation as future research directions for engagement. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 32(5-6), 579-585.
- Calder, B.J., Malthouse, E.C. and Schaedel, U. (2009), "An experimental study of the relationship between online engagement and advertising effectiveness", *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, Vol. 23 No. 4, pp. 321-331.
- Campbell, D. T. and Fiske, D. W. (1959). Convergent and discriminant validation by the multitrait-multimethod matrix. *Psychological Bulletin*, 56 (2), 81-105.

- Carter, S. (2008). *The new language of marketing 2.0*. Boston: Pearson Education.
- Cassell, C. and Lee, B. (2011). Development in mixed methods research: implications for management research and management researchers. *University of Sheffield Working Paper*, In: *Proceeding of BAM conference 2011*, 15 September 2011, Aston University.
- Cassell, C., Buehring, A., Symon, G., Johnson, P. and Bishop, V. (2006). Qualitative management research: a thematic analysis of interviews with stakeholders in the field, *ESRC Benchmarking Good Practice in Qualitative Management Research*, ESRC Grant Number H33250006, UK, and Swindon: The Economic and Social Research Council.
- Catteeuw, Frank, Eileen Flynn, and James Vonderhorst (2007), "Employee Engagement: Boosting Productivity in Turbulent Times," *Organizational Development Journal*, 25 (summer), 151–156.
- Chan, K. W., Yim, C. K., & Lam, S. S. (2010). Is customer participation in value creation a double-edged sword? Evidence from professional financial services across cultures. *Journal of Marketing*, 74, 48–64. doi:10.1509/jmkg.74.3.48.
- Chan, Kimmy WA, Chi Kin (Bennett) Yim, and Simon S. K. Lam (2010), the impact of new media on customer relationships. *Journal of Service Research* 13 (3):311–30. doi:10.1177/1094670510375460.
- Chatterjee, P. 2001. Online reviews: Do consumers use them? *Advances in Consumer Research* 28: 129–33.
- Chaudhuri, A., & Holbrook, M. B. (2001). The chain of effects from brand trust and brand affect to brand performance the role of brand loyalty. *Journal of marketing*, 65(2), 81-93.
- Chen, Chien-Wei, and Nai-Hwa Lien. (2017). "Social media and marketing effectiveness."
- Chestnut, R. W., & Jacoby, J. (1978). Brand loyalty: measurement and management. *Whiley New York*.
- Cheung, C., M. Lee, and X. Jin. 2011. Customer engagement in an online social platform: A conceptual model and scale development. ICIS 2011 Proceedings, Shanghai, China, Paper 8.

- Claire Brownell (2016). *Vision Critical is ready to take on the 'age of the customer' by helping companies figure out what motivates buyers.* [ONLINE] Available at: <http://business.financialpost.com/entrepreneur/>. [Accessed 9 July 2017].
- Coates, H. (2007). A model of online and general campus-based student engagement. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 32(2), 121-141.
- Collingridge, D. S. and Gantt, E. E. (2008). The quality of qualitative research. *American Journal of Medical Quality*, 23 (5), 389.
- Collis, J. and Hussey, R. (2003). *Business Research: A Practical Guide for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Students*, 2nd Edition, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Countries with the most Facebook users as of April 2017. (2017). [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/268136/top-15-countries-based-on-number-of-facebook-users/>(Accessed on 15th October 2017).
- Cova, B. and Pace, S. (2006), “Brand community of convenience products: new forms of customers’ empowerment – the case of my Nutella community”, *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 40 Nos 9/10, pp. 1087-105.
- Crabtree, B. F., & Miller, W. L. (Eds.). (1999). *Doing qualitative research*. Sage publications.
- Creswell, J. (1998). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J. W. (1994). *Research Design: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 2nd Edition, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. W. and Plano Clark, V. L. (2007). *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- Currall, S. C. and Towler, A. J. (2003). Research methods in management and organizational research: toward integration of qualitative and quantitative techniques. In: A. Tashakkori and C. Teddlie (Eds.), *Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social and Behavioural Research*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 513-526.
- Dabholkar, Pratibha A. (1990), "How to Improve Perceived Service Quality by Improving Customer Participation," in *Development in Marketing Science*, B.J. Dunlap, ed., Cullowhee, NC: Academy of Marketing Science, 483–487.
- Day, G. 1999. *The market driven organization*. New York: The Free Press.
- De Almeida, S. O., Mazzon, J. A., Dholakia, U., & Muller, H. (2013). Participant diversity and expressive freedom in firm-managed and customer-managed brand communities. *Brazilian Administration Review*, 10(2), 195–218.
- De Valck K., G. H. van Bruggen, and B. Wierenga. 2009. Virtual communities: A marketing perspective. *Decision Support Systems* 47 (3):185–203.doi:10.1016/j. dss.2009.02.008.
- De Valck, K., Langerak, F., Verhoef, P. C., & Verlegh, P. W. J. (2007). Satisfaction with virtual communities of interest: Effect on members' visit frequency. *British Journal of Management, Communities. Tec novation*, 31(7), 296–308.
- Deshpande, R. (1983). "Paradigms Lost": on theory and method in research in marketing. *The Journal of Marketing*, 101-110.
- Dessart, L., Veloutsou, C., & Morgan-Thomas, A. (2015). Consumer engagement in online brand communities: A social media perspective. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 24(1), 28–42. Doi: 10.1108/JPBM-06-2014-0635.
- Dholakia, Utpal M., Vera Blazevic, Caroline Wiertz, and Rene' Algesheimer (2009), "Communal Service Delivery: How Customers Benefit from Participation in Firm-hosted P3 Communities," *Journal of Service Research*, 12 (2), 208-226.

- Dillman, D.A. (2000). *Mail and Internet surveys: The tailored design method (2nd ed.)*. New Education, 55, 444-453.
- Dion Hinchcliffe. (2016). *the enterprise technologies to watch in 2016*. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.zdnet.com/article/>. [Accessed 14 October 2016].
- Doorn, V., N. Lemon, V. Mittal, S. Nass, D. Pick, P. Pirner, and P. C. Verhoef. 2010. Customer engagement behaviour: Theoretical foundations and research directions. *Journal of Service Research* 13 (3):253–66. Doi: 10.1177/1094670510375599.
- Duffett, R.G., 2015. Facebook advertising's influence on intention-to-purchase and purchase amongst Millennials. *Internet Res.* 25 (4), 498–526.
- Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R. and Jackson, P. R. (2008). *Management Research*, 3rd Edition, London: Sage Publications.
- Eisingerich, A. B., Auh, S., & Merlo, O. (2014). Acta non-verba? The role of customer participation and word of mouth in the relationship between service firms' customer satisfaction and sales performance. *Journal of Service Research*, 17, 40–53.doi: 10.1177/1094670513490836.
- Erat, Pablo, Kevin C. Desouza, Anja Schafer-Jugel, and Monika Kurzawa (2006), "Business Customer Communities and Knowledge Sharing: Exploratory Study of Critical Issues," *European Journal of Information Systems*, 15 (5), 511–524.
- Eriksson, P. and Kovalainen, A. (2008). *Qualitative Methods in Business Research*, London: Sage Publications.
- Evans, D., & McKee, J. (2010). *Social media marketing. The next generation of business Engagement*. Indianapolis, IN: Wiley Publishing, Inc.
- Ewing, M. T., Wag staff, P. E., & Powell, I. H. (2013). Brand rivalry and community conflict.
- F. Alpert, C. Roberts, (2010) Total customer engagement: designing and aligning key strategic elements to achieve growth *J. Prod. Brand Manag.* 19 (3) (2010), pp. 198-209

- Facebook company information. (2017). [ONLINE] Available at: <https://newsroom.fb.com/company-info/> (Accessed on 5th November 2017).
- Facebook users: age distribution in Great Britain 2013-2017. (2017). [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/278287/age-distribution-of-facebook-users-in-great-britain/> (Accessed on 15 November 2017).
- Fang, E. (2008). Customer participation and the trade-off between new product innovativeness and speed to market. *Journal of Marketing*, 72, 90–104. doi:10.1509/jmkg.72.4.90.
- Feilzer, M. Y. (2010). Doing mixed methods research pragmatically: implications for the rediscovery of pragmatism as a research paradigm. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 4 (1), 6-16.
- Festinger, L. (1954). A theory of social comparison processes. *Human Relations*, 7(2), 117–140.
- Fleming, John H., Curt Coffman, and James K. Harter (2005), “Manage Your Human Sigma,” *Harvard Business Review*, 83, 7 (July–August), 107–114.
- Forman, J., Creswell, J. W., Damschroder, L., Kowalski, C. P., & Krein, S. L. (2008). Qualitative research methods: key features and insights gained from use in infection prevention research. *American journal of infection control*, 36(10), 764-771.
- Fornell, C., & Wernerfelt, B. (1987). Defensive marketing strategy by customer complaint management: A theoretical analysis. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 24, 337–346. doi: 10.2307/ 3151381.
- Fornell, C., and D. F. Larcker. 1981. Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. *Journal of Marketing Research* 18 (1):39–50. doi: 10.2307/ 3151312.
- Fournier, S. (1998). Consumers and their brands: Developing relationship theory in consumer research. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 24(4), 343–373.
- Frank, D.F, Finnegan, R.P., & Taylor, C.R., (2004). The race for talent: Retaining and engaging workers in the 21st century. *Human Resource Planning*, 27(3), 12-25.

- Franz, R., & Wolking, T. (2003). Customer integration with virtual communities. Case study: The online community of the largest regional newspaper in Austria. 33th Annual Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences, Big Island, HI.
- Gallego, J. A. (2012). *Todo lo que hay que sabers de comunidades virtuales y redes sociales*. Madrid, Spain: Wolters Kluwer.
- Gambetti, R. C., Graffigna, G., & Biraghi, S. (2012). The grounded theory approach to consumer brand engagement: The practitioner's standpoint. *International Journal of Market Research*, 54 (5), 659.doi:10.2501/IJMR-54-5-659-687.
- Gambetti, R.C. and Graffigna, G. (2010), "The concept of engagement: a systematic analysis of the ongoing marketing debate", *International Journal of Market Research*, Vol. 52 No. 6, pp. 801-826.
- Ganley, D., & Lampe, C. (2009). The ties that bind: social network principles in online communities. *Decision support system*, 47(3), 266-274.
- GAO, Q., Feng, C., 2016. Branding with social media: user gratifications, usage patterns, and brand message content strategies. *Comput. Hum. Behav.* 63, 868–890.
- Garczynski, A. M., Waldrop, J. S., Rupprecht, E. A., & Grawitch, M. J. (2013). Differentiation between work and nonwork self-aspects as a predictor of presenteeism and engagement: cross-cultural differences. *Journal of occupational health psychology*, 18(4), 417.
- Gensler, Sonja, Franziska Volckner, Yuping Liu-Thompkins, and Caroline Wiertz (2013), "Managing Brands in the Social Media Environment," *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 27, 4, 242–56.
- Ghuneim, Mark (2008), "Terms of Engagement: Measuring the Active Consumer," *Wiredset*, March 26.
- Gill, J and Johnson, P. (2002). *Research Methods for Managers*, 3rd Edition, London: Sage Publications.

- Goyette, I., Ricard, L., Bergeron, J. and Marticotte, F., 2010.e- WOM Scale: word- of- mouth measurement scale for e- services context. *Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences/Revue Canadienne des Sciences de administration*, 27(1), pp.5-23.
- Grafton, J., Lillis, A. M. and Mahama, H. (2011). Mixed methods research in accounting. *Qualitative Research in Accounting & Management*, 8 (1), 5-21.
- Greene, J. C. and Caracelli, V. J. (1997). Defining and describing the paradigm issue in mixed-method evaluation. *New Directions for Evaluation*, 1997 (74), 5-17.
- Gruner, R. L., Homburg, C., & Lukas, B. A. (2014). Firm-hosted online brand communities and new product success. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 42(1), 29–48.
- Gummerus, J., Liljander, V., Weman, E., & Pihlstorm, M. (2012). Customer engagement in a Facebook brand community. *Management Research Review*, 35(9), 857–877.
- Gummerus, Johanna, et al. "Customer engagement in a Facebook brand community." *Management Research Review* 35.9 (2012): 857-877.
- Gusfield, J. (1975). *The community: A critical response*. New York: Harper Colophon.
- Habibi, M. R., Laroche, M., & Richard, M. O. (2014). The roles of brand community and community engagement in building brand trust on social media. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 37, 152-161.
- Habibi, M.R., Laroche, M. and Richard, M.O. (2014), “Brand communities based in social media: how unique are they? Evidence from two exemplary brand communities”, *International Journal of Information management*, Vol. 34 No. 2, pp. 123-132.
- Habibi, Mohammad Reza, Michel Laroche, and Marie-Odile Richard. "Testing an extended model of consumer behavior in the context of social media-based brand communities." *Computers in Human Behavior* 62 (2016): 292-302.

- Haenlein, M., & Kaplan, A. M. (2010). An empirical analysis of attitudinal and behavioural reactions toward the abandonment of unprofitable customer relationships. *Journal of Relationship Marketing*, 9(4), 200-228.
- Hagel, J., III, & Armstrong, A. G. (1997). *Net gain: Expanding markets through virtual communities*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- Hair, J.F., Anderson, R.E., Tatham, R.L., & Black, W.C. (1992). *Multivariate data analysis with readings (3rd ed.)*. New York: Macmillan.
- Harden, L., & Heyman, B. (2009). *Digital engagement: Internet marketing that captures customers and builds intense brand loyalty*. New York: AMACOM.
- Harmeling, Colleen M., et al. "Toward a theory of customer engagement marketing." *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 45.3 (2017): 312-335.
- Hartmann, B. J., Wiertz, C., & Arnould, E. J. (2015). Exploring consumptive moments of value- creating practice in online community. *Psychology & Marketing*, 32(3), 319-340.
- Haslam, S. A., Ryan, M. K., Postmes, T., Spears, R., Jetten, J., & Webley, P. (2006). Sticking to our guns: Social identity as a basis for the maintenance of commitment to faltering organizational projects. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 27(5), 607–628.
- Hassan, M., Casaló, L.V., 2016. Consumer devotion to a different height. *Internet Res.* 26 (4), 963–981.
- Haven, Brian (2007), "Marketing's New Key Metric: Engagement," Forrester Research.
- Hayes, A. (2005). *Statistical methods for communication science*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Heath, R. (2007). How do we predict advertising attention and engagement? *School of Management University of Bath Working Paper*, 9.

- Heere, B., Walker, M., Yoshida, M., Ko, Y. J., Jordan, J. S., & James, J. D. (2011). Brand community development through associated communities: Grounding community measurement within social identity theory. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 19(4), 407–422.
- Hennig-Thurau, T., K. P. Gwinner, G. Walsh, and D. D. Gremler. 2004. Electronic word-of mouth via consumer-opinion platforms: What motivates consumers to articulate themselves on the Internet? *Journal of Interactive Marketing* 18 (1):38–52. doi:10.1002/dir.10073.
- Hennig-Thurau, Thorsten, Edward C. Malthouse, Christian Friege, Sonja Gensler, Lara Lobschat, Arvind Rangaswamy, and Bernd Skiera (2010), “The Impact of New Media on Customer Relationships,” *Journal of Service Research*, 13, 3, 311–30.
- Henri, F., & Pudelko, B. (2003). Understanding and analysing activity and learning in virtual communities. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*, 19(4), 474–487.
- Henry, G. (2009). Practical sampling. In L. Bickman & D. Rog (Eds.), *the sage handbook of applied social research methods* (pp. 77-105), Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Higgins, E.T., Scholer, A.A., 2009. Engaging the consumer: the science and art of the value creation process. *J. Consum. Psychol.* 19 (2), 100–114.
- Hogan, M.J., Andrews, J.R., Andrews, O., & Williams, G. (2008). *Public speaking and civic engagement*. Boston MA: Pearson.
- Holland, J. (2004). *Corporate Intangibles, Value Relevance and Disclosure Content*, ICAS Research Report, Edinburgh: The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland.
- Hollebeek, L. (2011b). Exploring customer brand engagement: Definition and themes. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 19(7), 555–573. doi:10.1080/0965254X.2011.599493.
- Hollebeek, L. D., & Chen, T. (2014). Exploring positively – versus negatively – valenced brand engagement: A conceptual model. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 23(1), 62–74. doi: 10.1108/JPBM-06-2013-0332.

- Hollebeek, L. D., Glynn, M. S., & Brodie, R. J. (2014). Consumer brand engagement in social media: Conceptualization, scale development and validation. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 28(2), 149–165. doi: 10.1016/j.intmar.2013.12.002.
- Hollebeek, L. D., Srivastava, R. K., & Chen, T. (2016). SD logic-informed customer engagement: integrative framework, revised fundamental propositions, and application to CRM. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*. Doi 10.1007/s11747-016-0494-5.
- Hollebeek, L., and T. Chen. 2014. Exploring positively versus negatively valenced brand engagement: A conceptual model. *Journal of Product and Brand Management* 23 (1):62–74. doi:10.1108/JPBM-06-2013-0332.
- Holloway, I., & Todres, L. (2003). The status of method: flexibility, consistency and coherence. *Qualitative research*, 3(3), 345-357.
- Howe, K. R. (1988). Against the quantitative-qualitative incompatibility, thesis or dogmas die-hard. *Educational Researcher*, 17 (8), 10-16.
- Hsieh, S. H., & Chang, A. (2016). The psychological mechanism of brand co-creation engagement. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 33, 13-26.
- Huo, Y.J., Binning, K.R., & Ludwin, M.E. (2009). Testing an integrative model of respect: Implications for social engagement and well-being. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 20(10), 1-13.
- Hur, K., Kim, T. T., Karatepe, O. M., & Lee, G. (2017). An exploration of the factors influencing social media continuance usage and information sharing intentions among Korean travellers. *Tourism Management*, 63, 170e178.
- Hutter, K., Hautz, J., Dennhardt, S., & Füller, J. (2013). The impact of user interactions in social media on brand awareness and purchase intention: the case of MINI on Facebook. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 22(5/6), 342-351.

- Hyllegard, K., Ogle, J., Yan, R., & Reitz, A. (2011). An exploratory study of college students fanning behavior on Facebook: The influence of technology acceptance, identity, and market mavenism. *The College Student Journal*, 45(3), 601-616.
- Hyllegard, K., Ogle, J., Yan, R., & Reitz, A. (2012). *Female consumers' fanning of companies on Facebook: The influence of generational cohorts*. Manuscript submitted for publication.
- Islam, J. U., & Rahman, Z. (2016). Linking customer engagement to trust and word-of-mouth on Facebook brand communities: An empirical study. *Journal of Internet Commerce*, 15(1), 40-58.
- Jaakkola, E., & Alexander, M. (2014). The Role of Customer Engagement Behavior in Value Co-Creation: A Service System Perspective. *Journal of Service Research*, 17(3), 247–261.doi: 10.1177/ 1094670514529187.
- Jang, H., Olfman, L., Ko, I., Koh, J., & Kim, K. (2008). The influence of on-line brand community characteristics on community commitment and brand loyalty. *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, 12(3), 57–80.
- Jarvenpaa, S. L., & Lang, K. R. (2011). Boundary management in online communities: Case studies of the Nine Inch Nails and ccMixter music remix sites.
- Jennings, K.M., & Stoker, L. (2004). Social trust and civic engagement across time and generations. *Acta Politica*, 39(4), 342-379. *Journal of Business Research*, 66(1), 4–12.
- Jick, T. D. (1979). Mixing qualitative and quantitative methods: triangulation in action. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 24 (4), 602-611.
- Joanne Webb (2016). This is how long we spend on Facebook – and the figure might shock you. [ONLINE]Available at: <https://www.mirror.co.uk/tech/how-long-spend-facebook>.(Accessed on 16th August 2017).
- Jogulu, U. D. and Pansiri, J. (2011). Mixed methods: a research design for management doctoral dissertation. *Management Research Review*, 34 (6), 687-701.

- Johnson, R. B. and Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2004). Mixed methods research: a research paradigm whose time has come. *Educational Researcher*, 33 (7), 14-26.
- Johnson, R. B., Onwuegbuzie, A. J. and Turner, L. A., (2007). Toward a definition of mixed methods research. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 1 (2), 112-133.
- Josefina Casas. (2017). *Facebook Groups and Online Communities: 17 Reasons Why Big Brands are using them in Their Strategies*. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://postcron.com/en/blog/facebook-groups-online-communities/>[Accessed 11 October 2017].
- Josh Constine. (2017). *Facebook now has 2 billion monthly users... and responsibility* [ONLINE] Available at: <https://techcrunch.com/2017/06/27/facebook-2-billion-users/>(Accessed on 8th November 2017).
- Jullion D'Onfro. (2017). *Facebook crushes expectations stock soars*. [ONLINE]Available at: <http://uk.businessinsider.com/facebook-q1-2016-earnings-2016?> (Accessed on 13th December 2016).
- Kahn, William A. (1990), "Psychological Conditions of Personal Engagement and Disengagement at Work," *Academy of Management Journal*, 33 (4), 692-724.
- Kaltcheva, D., Patino, V., Laric, A. V., Pitta, D., & Imparato, N. (2014). Customers' relational models as determinants of customer engagement value. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 23(1), 55–61.doi: 10.1108/JPBM-07-2013-0353.
- Kane, B.H. (Major) (2008). Comprehensive engagement: A winning strategy. Future war paper, AY 2007-08, United States Marine Corps. http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD_
- Kataria, A., Rastogi, R., & Garg, P. (2013). Organizational effectiveness as a function of employee engagement. *South Asian Journal of Management*, 20(4), 56.
- Kate Legget (2016). Your Customers Do not Want to Call You for Support. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://go.forrester.com/blogs/>. [Accessed 20 February 2017].
- Keat, R. and Urry, J. (1982). *Social Theory as Science*, 2nd Edition, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

- Kelley, J.B., Alden, D.L., 2016. Online brand community: through the eyes of self-determination theory. *Internet Res.* 26 (4), 790–808.
- Kelvin Claveria. (2016). *Why online communities are growing—and how you can get more from them*. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.visioncritical.com/why-online-communities-are-growing/> [Accessed 17 February 2017].
- Kent Anderson. (2017). *Building Healthy Online Communities —an Interview with Rachel Happe*. [ONLINE]Available at: <https://scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/2017/10/24/building-healthy-online-communities-interview-rachel-happe/>. [Accessed 28th November 2017]
- Kim, J. W., Choi, J., Qualls, W., & Han, K. (2008). It takes a marketplace community to raise brand commitment: The role of online communities. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 24
- Kim, S. J., Wang, R. J. H., Maslowska, E., & Malthouse, E. C. (2016). “Understanding a fury in your words”: The effects of posting and viewing electronic negative word-of-mouth on purchase behaviours. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 54, 511-521.
- Kit Smith. (2017). *Marketing: 47 Incredible Facebook Statistics*. [ONLINE]Available at: <https://www.brandwatch.com/blog/47-facebook-statistics-2016/> (Accessed on 7th November 2017).
- Koh, J. and Kim, Y.G. (2004), “Knowledge sharing in virtual communities: an e-business perspective”, *Expert Systems with Applications*, Vol. 26 No. 2, pp. 155-166.
- Koh, J., & Kim, Y. G. (2003–04). Sense of virtual community: A conceptual framework and empirical validation. *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, 8(2), 75–93.
- Kohli, C., Suri, R., & Kapoor, A. (2015). Will social media kill branding? *Business Horizons*, 58(1), 35e44.
- Kozinets, R. V. (1999). E-tribalized marketing? The strategic implications of virtual communities of consumption. *European Management Journal*, 17(3), 252–264.

- Kozinets, R. V. (2002). The field behind the screen: Using netnography for marketing research in online communities. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 39(1), 61–72.
- KPMG, (2017). the truth about online consumer: 2017 Global online report. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://assets.kpmg.com/content/dam/kpmg/xx/pdf/2017/01/the-truth-about-online-consumers.pdf> [Accessed 11 October 2017].
- Kristopher Arcand. (2015). *MROCs Are the Missing Piece to the Research Puzzle*. [ONLINE] Available at: [Accessed 14 October 2016].
- Kuh, G.D. (2003). What we are learning about student engagement from NSSE. *Change*, 35, 24–31.
- Kumar, V. (2015). Evolution of marketing as a discipline: What has happened and what to look out for. *Journal of Marketing* 79 (1):1–9. doi:10.1509/jm.79.1.1.
- Kumar, V., & Pansari, A. (2016). Competitive advantage through engagement. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 53(4), 497–514.
- Kumar, V., Aksoy, L., Donkers, B., Venkatesan, R., Wiesel, T., & Tillmanns, S. (2010). Undervalued or overvalued customers: Capturing total customer engagement value. *Journal of Service Research*, 13, 297–310. doi: 10.1177/1094670510375602.
- Kuo, Y. F., & Feng, L. H. (2013). Relationships among community interaction characteristics, perceived benefits, community commitment, and oppositional brand loyalty in online brand communities. *International Journal of Information Management*, 33(6), 948–962.
- Laroche, M., Habibi, M. R., Richard, M.-O., & Sankaranarayanan, R. (2012). The effects of social media based brand communities on brand community markers, value creation practices, and brand trust and brand loyalty. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 28(5), 1755–1767.
- Laughlin, R. (1995). Empirical research in accounting: alternative approaches and a case for ‘middle range’ thinking. *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal*, 8 (1), 63–87.
- Lechner, U., Stanoevska-Slabeva, K., & Tan, Y. (2002). Communities in the digital economy. *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, 6(3), 1–95.

- Leckie, C., Nyadzayo, M. W., & Johnson, L. W. (2016). Antecedents of consumer brand engagement and brand loyalty. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 32(5-6), 558-578.
- Levy, J. (2010). *Facebook marketing: Designing your next marketing campaign (2nd ed.)*.
- Libai, B., R. Bolton, M. S. Bugel, K. De Ruyter, O. Gotz, H. Risselada, and A. T. Stephen. 2010. Customer-to-customer interactions: Broadening the scope of word of mouth research. *Journal of Service Research* 13 (3):267–82.doi:10.1177/1094670510375600.
- Lindlof, T., & Taylor, B. (2002). *Qualitative communication research methods (2nd ed.)*. Marquette Books.
- Lomborg, Stine. "A state of flux: Histories of social media research." *European Journal of Communication* 32.1 (2017): 6-15.
- London, B., Downey, G., & Mace, S. (2007). Psychological theories of educational engagement: A multi-method approach to studying individual engagement and institutional change. *Vand. L. Rev.*, 60, 455.
- Luthans, F., & Peterson S.J. (2002). Employee engagement and manager self-efficacy: *Management University of Bath Working Paper*, 9.
- MacCallum RC, Widaman KF, Zhang S, Hong S. Sample size in factor analysis. *Psychological Methods*. 1999; 4:84–99.
- Malhotra, A., Malhotra, C. K., & See, A. (2013). How to create brand engagement on Facebook. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 54(2), 18.
- Malin Liden. (2016). *Critical Reasons to Invest in Online Communities*. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/sap>. [Accessed 14 December 2016].
- Malthouse, E. C., Calder, B. J., Kim, S. J., & Vandenberg, M. (2016). Evidence that user-generated content that produces engagement increases purchase behaviours. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 32(5-6), 427-444.

- Malthouse, E. C., Haenlein, M., Skiera, B., Wege, E., & Zhang, M. (2013). Managing customer relationships in the social media era: Introducing the social CRM house. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 27(4), 270–280. doi: 10.1016/j.intmar.2013.09.008.
- Malthouse, Edward C., et al., (2015) "Managing customer relationships in the social media era: introducing the social CRM house." *Journal of Interactive Marketing* 27.4 (2013): 270-280.
- Marketing Science Institute (2006), *2006–2008 Research Priorities: A Guide to MSI Research Programs and Procedures*, Cambridge, MA.
- Marketing Science Institute (2006), *2006–2008 Research Priorities: A Guide to MSI Research Programs and Procedures*, Cambridge, MA. ——— (2010), *2010–2012, 2014-16 Research Priorities*, Cambridge, MA.
- Marketing Science Institute (2010), *2010–2012 Research Priorities: A Guide to MSI Research Programs and Procedures*, Cambridge, MA.
- Marketing Science Institute “2010–2012 Research Priorities,” Cambridge, MA: Marketing Science Institute.
- Marketing Science Institute “2014–2016 Research Priorities,” Cambridge, MA: Marketing Science Institute.
- Marshall, M. N., 1996. Sampling for qualitative research. *Family practice*, 13 (6), 522-526.
- Martinez-Lopez, F.J., Anaya-Sánchez, R., Aguilar-Illescas, R., Molinillo, S., 2016. Online Brand Communities. Using the Social Web for Branding and Marketing. Springer, Berlin, Germany.
- Martinez-Lopez, Francisco J., et al. "Consumer Engagement in an Online Brand Community." *Electronic Commerce Research and Applications* (2017).
- Maslowska, E., Malthouse, E. C., & Collinger, T. (2016). The customer engagement ecosystem. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 32(5-6), 469-501.

- Matt McGee. (2016). *Why Do Consumers Become Facebook Fans? Study Says It Depends on The Brand*. [ONLINE]Available at: <https://marketingland.com/> (Accessed on 23rd September 2017).
- Matt Rosoff. (2016). *Online communities do not have to be hate-filled cesspools-and this person proved it*. [ONLINE]Available at: <http://uk.businessinsider.com/joel-spolsky-stack-exchange-interview-2016-12>. [Accessed 26th April2017].
- May, Douglas R., Richard L. Gilson, and Lynn M. Harter (2004), “The Psychological Conditions of Meaningfulness, Safety and Availability and the Engagement of the Human Spirit at Work,” *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 77 (March), 11–37.
- Mazman, S. G., & Usluel, Y. K. (2010). Modeling educational usage of Facebook. *Computers & Education*, 55(2), 444-453.
- McAlexander, James H., John W. Schouten, and Harold F. Koenig (2002), “Building Brand Community,” *Journal of Marketing*, 66 (January), 38-54.
- McKinnon, J. (1988). Reliability and validity in field research: some strategies and tactics. *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal*, 1 (1), 34-54.
- McMillan, D. W., & Chavis, D. M. (1986). Sense of community: A definition and theory. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 14(1), 6–23.
- McMullan, R. and Gilmore, A., 2003. The conceptual development of customer loyalty measurement: A proposed scale. *Journal of Targeting, Measurement and Analysis for Marketing*, 11(3), pp.230-243.
- Mertens, D. M. (2008). Mixed methods and the politics of human research - the Transformative-Emancipatory perspective. In: V. Plano Clark and J. W. Creswell (Eds.), *the Mixed Methods Reader*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 68-104.
- Meskauskas, J. (2006). Measure for measure: Engagement.
- Michael S. Goldberg and Christopher Koch. (2017). *How Top Brands Nurture Their Online Communities*. [ONLINE]Available at: www.digitalistmag.com. [Accessed on 12th March 2017].

- Mickens, Daniel (2012), "60% of Consumers Expect Brands to Respond on Social Media," retrieved September 5, 2016 from <http://mashable.com/2012/07/18/brand-social-media-comments>.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded source book* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Modell, S. (2005). Triangulation between case study and survey methods in management accounting research: an assessment of validity implications. *Management Accounting Research*, 16 (2), 231-254.
- Modell, S. (2007). Integrating qualitative and quantitative methods in management accounting research: a critical realist approach, *SSRN Working Paper*, [Online] Available at: http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=997194 [Accessed 1 March 2008].
- Modell, S. (2009). In defense of triangulation: a critical realist approach to mixed methods research in management accounting. *Management Accounting Research*, 20 (3), 208-221.
- Modell, S. (2010). Bridging the paradigm divide in management accounting research: the role of mixed methods approaches. *Management Accounting Research*, 21 (2), 124-129.
- Molina-Azorin, J. F. (2011). The use and benefit of mixed methods in management research. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 5 (1), 7-24.
- Mollen, A., & Wilson, H. (2010). Engagement, telepresence and interactivity in online consumer experience: Reconciling scholastic and managerial perspectives. *Journal of Business Research*, 63, 919-925.
- Moorman, C., Zaltman, G., & Deshpande, R. (1992). Relationships between providers and users of market research: The dynamic of trust within and between organizations. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 29(3), 314-328.
- Morales, L., & Giugni, M. (Eds.). (2016). *Social capital, political participation and migration in Europe: making multicultural democracy work?* Springer.

- More Than Half of UK Population Will Log on to Facebook This Year. (2016) [ONLINE] Available at: [https://www.emarketer.com/Article/More-Than-Half-of-UK-Population-Will-Log-on-Facebook-This-Year/\(7th August 2017\).](https://www.emarketer.com/Article/More-Than-Half-of-UK-Population-Will-Log-on-Facebook-This-Year/(7th%20August%202017).)
- Morgan, G. and Smircich, L. (1980). The case for qualitative research. *Academy of Management Review*, 5 (4), 491-500.
- Morgan, Robert M., and Shelby Hunt (1994), "The Commitment- Trust Theory of Relationship Marketing," *Journal of Marketing*, 58 (July), 20–38.
- Morimoto, S. A., & Friedland, L. A. (2013). Cultivating success: Youth achievement, capital and civic engagement in the contemporary United States. *Sociological Perspectives*, 56(4), 523-546.
- Morse, J. M. (2016). *Mixed method design: Principles and procedures* (Vol. 4). Routledge.
- Muniz, A. M., & O'Guinn, T. C. (2001). Brand communities. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 27 (4), 412–432.
- Nambisan, Satish (2002), "Designing Virtual Customer Environments for New Product Development: Toward a Theory," *Academy of Management Review*, 27 (3), 392–413.
- Nasi, M., Rasanen, P., & Lehdonvirta, V. (2011). Identification with online and offline communities: Understanding ICT disparities in Finland. *Technology in Society*, 2(1–2), 4–11.
- Negrine, R., & Newbold, C. (1998). Media audiences: survey research. In A. Hansen, S. Cottle, R. Negrine, & C. Newbold (Eds.), *Mass communication research methods*, (pp. 225-256), Washington Square, NY: New York University Press.
- Nelson-Field, K., & Taylor, J. (2012). Facebook fans: A fan for life.
- Ngai, E. W., Tao, S. S., & Moon, K. K. (2015). Social media research: Theories, constructs, and conceptual frameworks. *International Journal of Information Management*, 35(1), 33-44.
- Noland, James, and Robert A. Phillips (2010), "Stakeholder Engagement, Discourse Ethics and Strategic Management," *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 12 (1), 39–49.

- O'Brien, H., & Toms, E. (2010). The development and evaluation of a survey to measure user engagement. *Journal of American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 61(1), 50-69.
- O'Mahony, S., & Ferraro, F. (2007). The emergence of governance in an open source community. *Academy of Management Journal*, 50(5), 1079–1106.
- Oliver, R.L. (1997), *Satisfaction: A behavioural perspective on the consumer*, Boston.
- Olson, T. (2009). Understanding collective content: Purposes, characteristics, and collaborative practices. ACM Proceedings of the Fourth International Conference on Communities and Technology, Pennsylvania State University, USA: University Park.
- Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2002). Why can't we all get along? Towards a framework for unifying research paradigms. *Education*, 122 (3), 518-530.
- Ouwersloot, H., & Odekerken-Schroder, G. (2008). Who's who in brand communities—and why? *European Journal of Marketing*, 42(5–6), 571–585.
- Özbölük, T., & Dursun, Y. (2017). Online brand communities as heterogeneous gatherings: an ethnographic exploration of Apple users. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 26(4), 375-385.
- Parry, K. W. (1998). Grounded theory and social process: a new direction for leadership research. *Leadership Quarterly*, 9 (1), 85-105.
- Patterson, P., Yu, T. and de Ruyter, K. (2006), “Understanding consumer engagement in services: in ‘Advancing theory, maintaining relevance’”, *Proceedings of ANZMAC 2006 Conference, Brisbane*, pp. 4-6.
- Patton, M. Q., 2002. *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. 3rd edition London: Sage Publications.
- Peris, R., Gimeno, M. A., Pinazo, D., Ortet, G., Carrero, V., Sanchiz, M., & Ibanez, I. (2002). Online chat rooms: Virtual spaces of interaction for socially oriented people. *Cyber Psychology & Behavior*, 5(1), 43-51.

- Pham, Michel T. and Tamar Avnet (2009), "Rethinking Regulatory Engagement Theory," *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 19, 2, 115–23.
- Podsakoff, P. M., S. B. Mackenzie, J. Y. Lee, and N. P. Podsakoff. 2003. Common method biases in behavioural research: A critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 88 (5):879–903. doi:10.1037/0021-9010.88.5.879.
- Porter, C. E. (2004). A typology of virtual communities a multi-disciplinary foundation for future research. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 10(1).
- Prahalad, C. K., & Ramaswamy, V. (2004). Co-creation experiences: The next practice in value creation. *Journal of interactive marketing*, 18(3), 5-14.
- Pritchard, M. P., Havitz, M. E., & Howard, D. R. (1999). Analysing the commitment-loyalty link in service context. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 27(3), 333–348.
- Ray Poynter. (2015). *The Top 20 Emerging Methods in Market Research for 2015: A GRIT Sneak Peek*. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.greenbookblog.org/>. [Accessed November 2016].
- Reagan, J. (2006). *Applied research methods for mass communications*. Spokane, WA.
- Resnick, E. (2001). Defining engagement. *Journal of International Affairs*, 54(2), 551-566.
- Rheingold, H. (2000). *The virtual community: Homesteading on the electronic frontier*. Cambridge, England: MIT Press.
- Rialti, Riccardo, et al. "Exploring the Antecedents of Brand Loyalty and Electronic Word of Mouth in Social-Media-Based Brand Communities: Do Gender Differences Matter?" *Journal of Global Marketing* (2017): 1-14.
- Roberts, C., & Alpert, F. (2010). Total customer engagement: designing and aligning key strategic elements to achieve growth. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 19(3), 198-209.
- Robertson, T. S. (1976). Low-commitment consumer behavior. *Journal of Advertising Research* 16: 19–24.

- Robinson, C., & Hullinger, H. (2008). New benchmarks in higher education: Student engagement in online learning. *Journal of Education and Business*, November/December 101-108.
- Robottom, I., & Hart, P. (1993). Towards a meta-research agenda in science and environmental education. *International Journal of Science Education*, 15(5), 591-605.
- Rood, V., & Bruckman, A. (2009). Member behavior in company online communities. Proceedings of International Conference on Supporting Group Work—GROUP, Sanibel Island, FL, 209–218.
- Rubin, H. J. and Rubin, I. S. (2005). *Qualitative Interview: The Art of Hearing Data*, 2nd Edition, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (2011). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data*. Sage.
- S. Ray, S.S. Kim, J.G. Morris, The central role of engagement in online communities, *Inf. Syst. Res.* 25 (2014) 528–546.
- Saldaña, J., 2009. *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.
- Sarason, S. B. (1974). The psychological sense of community. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Sarkar, A., & Sreejesh, S. (2014). Examination of the roles played by brand love and jealousy in shaping customer engagement. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 23(1), 24–32.doi: 10.1108/JPBM-05-2013-0315.
- Sashi. (2012). Customer engagement, buyer-seller relationships, and social media. *Management decision*, 50(2), 253-272.
- Saveanu, T., & Saveanu, S. (2012). SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT, WORK VALUES AND STUDENTS'TRAINING FOR THE LABOR MARKET. *Annals of the University of Oradea, Economic Science Series*, 21(1).
- Scarpi, Daniele (2010), “Does Size Matter? An Examination of Small and Large Web-Based Brand Communities,” *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 24, 1, 14–21.

- Schau, H. J., & Muniz, A. M. (2002). Brand communities and social identities: Negotiations in Cyberspace. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 29, 344–349.
- Schau, H. J., Muniz Jr, A. M., & Arnould, E. J. (2009). How brand community practices create value. *Journal of marketing*, 73(5), 30-51.
- Schaufeli, W.B. and Bakker, A.B. (2004), “Job demands, job resources, and their relationship with burnout and engagement: a multi-sample study”, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, Vol. 25, No. 3, pp. 293-315.
- Schaufeli, Wilmar B., Isabel M. Martinez., Alexandra M. Pinto, Marisa Salanova, and Arnold B. Bakker (2002), “Burnout and Engagement in University Students: A Cross-National Study,” *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 33 (5), 464–481.
- Schivinski, B., Christodoulides, G., & Dabrowski, D. (2016). Measuring Consumers' Engagement with Brand-Related Social-Media Content. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 56(1), 64-80.
- Schouten, J.W., & McAlexander, J.H. (1995). Subculture of consumptions: An ethnography of the new bikers. *The Journal of Consumer Research*, 22(1)43-61.
- Schwandt, T. A. (1996). Farewell to criteriology. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 2 (1), 58-72.
- Schwartz, R. W., Ayres, K. M., & Douglas, K. H. (2017). Effects of music on task performance, engagement, and behavior: A literature review. *Psychology of Music*, 0305735617691118.
- Scientific Software International (2011). About LISREL 8.8. Retrieved November 11, 2016 from <http://www.ssicentral.com/lisrel/new.html>.
- Scott, J., & Craig-Lees, M. (2010). Audience engagement and its effects on product placement recognition. *Journal of Promotion Management*, 16(1–2), 39–58. doi:10.1080/10496490903571803.
- Seale, C. (1999). *The Quality of Qualitative Research*, London: Sage Publications.

- Sean Bryant (2016). *How branded online communities can boost your ROI*. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.martechadvisor.com/articles/>. [Accessed 14 December 2016].
- Searle, J. R. (1995). *The construction of social reality*. Simon and Schuster.
- Seidman, I. (1998). *Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences*, 2nd Edition, New York: Teachers College Press.
- Seth Porges. (2014). *The Five Rules All Effective Online Communities Must Follow*. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/sethporges> [Accessed 11 April 2016].
- Shklar, Judith N. (1993), 'Obligation, Loyalty, Exile', *Political Theory*, 21, 2, pp. 181–197.
- Sicilia, M., & Palazon, M. (2008). Brand communities on the Internet. A case study of Coca-Cola's Spanish virtual community. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 13(3), 255–270.
- Silverman, D. (2001). *Interpreting Qualitative Data – Methods for Analysing Talking, Text and Interaction*, 2nd Edition, London: Sage Publications.
- Smith, J. K. (1983). Quantitative versus qualitative research: an attempt to clarify the issue. *Educational Researcher*, 12 (3), 6-13.
- Smith, J. K. and Heshusius, L. (1986). Closing the conversation: the end of the quantitative-qualitative debate among educational inquirers. *Educational Researcher*, 15 (1), 4-12.
- So, K.F., King, C. and Sparks, B. (2012), "Consumer engagement with tourism brands: scale development and validation", *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research*, Vol. 38 No. 3.
- Social Media Fact Sheet. (2017, January 22). [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.pewinternet.org/fact-sheet/social-media/>. (Accessed on 7th November 2017).
- Solis, B. (2010). *Engage: The complete guide for brands and businesses to build, cultivate, and measure success in the new web*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

- Sprott, D., Czellar, S. and Spangenberg, E. (2009), “The importance of a general measure of brand engagement on market behaviour: development and validation of a scale”, *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 46 No. 2, pp. 92-104.
- Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research: Perspectives on practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Stanoevska-Slabeva, K. (2001). Toward a community-oriented design of Internet platforms. *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, 6(3), 71–95.
- Strauss, A. and Corbin, J. (1998). *Basic of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, 2nd Edition, Thousand Oaks, and CA: Sage Publications.
- Sung, Y., Kim, Y., Kwon, O., & Moon, J. (2010). An explorative study of Korean consumer participation in virtual brand communities in social network sites. *Journal of Global Marketing*, 23(5), 430–445.
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W. G. Austin & S. Worchel (Eds.), *the social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 33–48). Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Tashakkori, A. and Teddlie, C. (1998). *Mixed Methodology: Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Tatiana Morand. (2017). *why most of the online communities fail and 5 ways to save them*. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://influitive.com/blog>. (Accessed on 5th October 2017).
- The Demographics of Social Media Users in 2016. (2017, April 25). [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.thinkdigitalfirst.com/2016/01/04/the-demographics-of-social-media-users-in-2018/> (Accessed on 15th May 2017).
- Thomas, T. C., Price, L. L., & Schau, H. J. (2013). When differences unite Resource dependence in heterogeneous consumption communities. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 39(5), 1010–1033.
- Tsai, H. T., & Huang, H. C. (2007). Determinants of e-repurchase intentions: An integrative model of quadruple retention drivers. *Information and Management*, 44(3), 231–239.

- Tsai, H.-T., Pai, P., 2012. Positive and negative aspects of online community cultivation: implications for online stores' relationship management. *Inf. Manage.* 49 (2), 111–117.
- Turner, J. C., Hogg, M. A., Oakes, P. J., Reicher, S. D., & Wetherell, M. S. (1987). *Rediscovering the social group: A self-categorization theory*. New York: Basil BlackWell.
- Ul Islam, J., Ul Islam, J., Rahman, Z., Rahman, Z., Hollebeek, L. D., & Hollebeek, L. D. (2017). Personality factors as predictors of online consumer engagement: an empirical investigation. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 35(4), 510-528.
- Van Doorn, J., Lemon, K. N., Mittal, V., Nass, S., Pick, D., Pirner, P., & Verhoef, P. C. (2010). Customer engagement behavior: Theoretical foundations and research directions. *Journal of Service Research*, 13(3), 253–266.doi: 10.1177/1094670510375599.
- Vanesa Di Mauro. (2015). *from customer Relationships to customer communities*. [ONLINE]Available at: [http://cmxhub.com/article/get-satisfaction-ceo-future-of community/](http://cmxhub.com/article/get-satisfaction-ceo-future-of-community/). [Accessed 11 April 2017].
- Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2004). Evolving to a new dominant logic for marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, 68(1), 1–17.
- Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2008). Service-dominant logic: Continuing the evolution. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 36, 1–10.doi: 10.1007/s11747-007-0069-6.
- Vargo, S.L. and Lusch, R.F. (2016), “Institutions and axioms: an extension and update of service-dominant logic”, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 44 No. 1, pp. 5-23.
- Verhoef, P. C., Reinartz, W. J., & Krafft, M. (2010). Customer engagement as a new perspective in customer management. *Journal of Service Research*, 13(3), 247–252.doi: 10.1177/1094670510375461.
- Vivek, S. D., Beatty, S. E., & Hazod, M. (2018). If You Build It Right, They Will Engage: A Study of Antecedent Conditions of Customer Engagement. In *Customer Engagement Marketing* (pp. 31-51). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.

- Vivek, S. D., Beatty, S. E., & Morgan, R. M. (2012). Customer engagement: Exploring customer relationships beyond purchase. *The Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 20(2), 122–146.doi: 10.2753/MTP1069-6679200201.
- Vivek, S. D., Beatty, S. E., Dalela, V., & Morgan, R. M. (2014). A generalized multidimensional scale for measuring customer engagement. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 22(4), 401-420.
- Von Hippel, E. (1986). Lead users: A source of novel product concepts. *Management Science*, 32 (7), 791–805.
- Von Hippel, E. (2009). Democratizing innovation: The evolving phenomenon of using innovation. *International Journal of Innovation Science*, 1, 29–40.doi: 10.1260/175722209787951224.
- Von Hippel, Eric (2005), *Democratizing Innovation*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Wagner, Christian, and Ann Majchrzak (2007), “Enabling Customer-Centricity Using Wiki the Wiki Way,” *Journal of Management Information Systems*, 23 (3), 17–43.
- Wallace, E., Buil, I., & De Chernatony, L. (2014). Consumer engagement with self-expressive brands: Brand love and WOM outcomes. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 23(1), 33–42. Doi: 10.1108/JPBM-06-2013-0326.
- Wang, R. (2011). Moving from transaction to engagement. *Retrieved Aug 28, 2011*.
- Wang, Y., Yu, Q., & Fesenmaier, D. R. (2002). Defining the virtual tourist community: Implications for tourism marketing. *Tourism Management*, 23(4), 407–417.
- Weiger, W. H., Wetzel, H. A., & Hammerschmidt, M. (2017). Leveraging marketer-generated appeals in online brand communities: An individual user-level analysis. *Journal of Service Management*, 28(1), 133-156.).
- Wheelock, Ana, Andreas B. Eisingerich, Gabriela B. Gomez, Emily Gray, Mark R. Dybul, and Peter Piot (2012), “Views of Policymakers, Healthcare Workers and NGOs on HIV Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP): A Multinational Qualitative Study,” *BMJ Open*, 2 (4), e001234.

- Whittaker, S., Isaacs, E., & O'Day, V. (1997). Widening the Net. Workshop report on the theory and practice of physical and network communities. *SIGCHI Bulletin*, 29, 27–30.
- Why People 'Like' and 'Unlike' Brands on Facebook. (2017, March 14) [ONLINE]Available at: <http://www.purelybranded.com/insights/why-people-like-and-unlike-brands-on-facebook/>. (Accessed on 23rd November 2017).
- Williams, S. J., Gabe, J., & Davis, P. (2008). The sociology of pharmaceuticals: progress and prospects. *Sociology of health & illness*, 30(6), 813-824.
- Wimmer, R.D., & Dominick, J.R. (2003). *Mass media research: An introduction (7th Ed.)*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Wirtz, Jochen, et al. "Managing brands and customer engagement in online brand communities." *Journal of Service Management* 24.3 (2013): 223-244.
- Wu, J., Fan, S. and Zhao, J. (2017). Community engagement and online word of mouth: An empirical investigation. *Information & Management*, pp.1-13.
- Xu, Y., Zhang, C., Xue, L., & Yeo, L. L. (2008). Product adoption in online social network. Twenty-Ninth International Conference on Information Systems, Paris, France.
- Yan, R. (2005). Waiting in service environments: Investigating the role of predicted value, wait disconfirmation, and providers' action in consumers' service evaluations. (Doctoral dissertation, The University of Arizona, 2005) UMI Dissertation Service: 3179062. York: Wiley.
- Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Zaglia, M. E. (2013). Brand communities embedded in social networks. *Journal of business research*, 66(2), 216-223.
- Zeithaml, V. A., Berry, L. L., & Parasuraman, A. (1996). The behavioural consequences of service quality. *The Journal of Marketing*, 31-46.

- Zhang, M., & Luo, N. (2016). Understanding relationship benefits from harmonious brand community on social media. *Internet Research*, 26(4), 809-826.
- Zhang, M., Guo, L., Hu, M., & Liu, W. (2017). Influence of customer engagement with company social networks on stickiness: Mediating effect of customer value creation. *International Journal of Information Management*, 37(3), 229e240.
- Zhou, Z., Zhang, Q., Su, C., Zhou, N., 2012. How do brand communities generate brand relationships? Intermediate mechanisms. *J. Bus. Res.* 65 (7), 890–895.
- Zhu, E. (2006). Interaction and cognitive engagement: An analysis of four asynchronous online discussions. *Instructional Science*, 34, 451-480.

Appendix: 1 Interview questions

- Q1 How do you describe your journey with apple and its online brand community?
- a) Probing questions for Participation:
 - i) How do they interact, share information, involve etc. with the apple brand community members in Facebook?
- Q2 How do you feel about apple products and its online brand community?
- a) Probing questions for Engagement:
 - i) Their passion, feelings, excitement etc. for apple brand through apple brand community.
- Q3 What is your past and present experience with apple products and its community and how will it be in future?
- a) Probing questions for loyalty:
 - i) Their past, present and future motivation and buying, searching and using behaviour for apple and brand community's role for these behaviours.
- Q4 How do you connect with apple products and its online brand community?
- a) Probing question for WoM:
 - i) Their word of mouth behaviour (e.g., Feedback, like, comments, endorse, advocate) for apple and apple brand community role for such activities.

Appendix: 2 Survey Questionnaire

Dear participants,

This survey asks about your brand community experience on Facebook. This information is collected for academic and pedagogic reasons and will be held securely and treated in the strictest confidence. The survey will take around 10 minutes to complete. I would very much appreciate if you could spare some time to answer to the questions below.

1. Please answer the following question.

Do you currently have a Facebook account?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

2. Please provide the following information about yourself.

What is your age?

- ☐ 18-30
- ☐ 31-40
- ☐ 41-50
- ☐ 51 above

3. What is your gender? (Please select one):

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Prefer not to say

4. What is your country of residence?

5. What is your ethnicity?

6. What is the highest education level you have completed?

- ☐ Some high school, no diploma
- ☐ Some college, no degree
- ☐ Bachelor's degree
- ☐ Master's or Doctoral degree
- ☐ Prefer not to say

7. Please provide the following information about your Facebook usage.

How long have you been a Facebook user?

- ☐ 0 to 2 years
- ☐ 3 to 5 years
- ☐ 6 to 10 years
- ☐ 11 years and more

8. Approximately, how many hours a week do you spend using Facebook?

- ☐ 0-2 hours
- ☐ 3-5 hours
- ☐ 6-10 hours
- ☐ 11 hours and more

9. How do you spend your time when you are using Facebook? Please select as many as apply.

- ☐ Reading friends' posts, liking and commenting on posts and chatting with them
- ☐ Posting messages/profile information/pictures/videos
- ☐ Reading companies' posts, seeking information and watching advertisements of companies/groups/brands
- ☐ Referring product(s) to friends/helping them to use the products
- ☐ Reading friends' posts and comments without liking or commenting it
- ☐ Playing games (Farmville, Mafia wars)
- ☐ Other (please specify)

10. How many brand communities do you follow on Facebook?

- ☐ 0
- ☐ 1-5
- ☐ 6-10
- ☐ 11-20
- ☐ 21 or more

11. What types of brand communities you follow on Facebook?

- ☐ Apparels and accessories
- ☐ Automobiles
- ☐ Entertainment
- ☐ Food/beverages
- ☐ Personal care
- ☐ Technology (e.g., apple, Samsung)
- ☐ Other (please specify)

12. How much time do you spend on the brand community that you follow on Facebook during a typical week?

- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Less than an hour

- 1-2 hours
- 3-5 hours
- 6-10 hours
- 11 hours and more

13. How many years of experience do you have with the brand community you follow on Facebook?

- 0-2 years
- 3-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11 years and more

14. I pay a lot of attention to anything about the brand community that I follow on Facebook.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Mildly disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Mildly agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

15. I spend a lot of discretionary time on the brand community that I follow on Facebook.

- Strongly disagree
- Mildly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Mildly agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

16. Anything related to the brand community that I follow grabs my attention on Facebook.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Mildly disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Mildly agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

17. I like to learn more about the brand community that I follow on Facebook.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Mildly disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Mildly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

18. Overall, my experiences with the brand community that I follow on Facebook are intense.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Mildly disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Mildly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

19. I feel like I learn a tremendous amount of information from the brand community I follow on Facebook.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Mildly disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Mildly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

20. I am passionate about the brand community that I follow on Facebook.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Mildly disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Mildly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

21. Being part of a brand community I follow on Facebook has encouraged my level of engagement with the brand.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree

- Mildly Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Mildly agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

22. I have read wall posts in the brand communities I follow on Facebook.

- More than once a week
- Once a week
- Two or three times a month
- Once a month
- A few times a year
- Once a year
- Less than once a year

23. I have read fan comments posted in the brand communities I follow on Facebook.

- More than once a week
- Once a week
- Two or three times a month
- Once a month
- A few times a year
- Once a year
- Less than once a year

24. I have responded to fan comments in the brand community I follow on Facebook.

- More than once a week
- Once a week
- Two or three times a month
- Once a month
- A few times a year
- Once a year
- Less than once a year

25. I have watched videos in the brand communities I follow on Facebook.

- More than once a week
- Once a week
- Two or three times a month
- Once a month
- A few times a year
- Once a year
- Less than once a year

26. I have posted comments in the brand communities I follow on Facebook.

- ☐ More than once a week
- ☐ Once a week
- ☐ Two or three times a month
- ☐ Once a month
- ☐ A few times a year
- ☐ Once a year
- ☐ Less than once a year

27. I have played games or been involved in other activities in the brand communities I follow on Facebook.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Mildly disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Mildly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

28. Being part of a brand community I follow on Facebook has encouraged my level of participation with the brand.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Mildly disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Mildly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

29. The products/brands of the company whose brand community I follow on Facebook are my first choice.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Mildly disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Mildly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

30. I prefer to use brands/products from the company whose brand community I follow on Facebook.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Mildly disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Mildly disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

31. I think the products/brands from the company whose brand community I follow on Facebook are the best on offer in the present.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Mildly disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Mildly agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

32. I prefer to buy products/brands from the company whose brand community I follow on Facebook instead of products/brands from the companies of other brand communities.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Mildly disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Mildly agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

33. I hold products/brands of the company whose brand community I follow on Facebook in high regard.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Mildly disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Mildly agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

34. I would buy products/brands from the company whose brand community I follow on Facebook in the future.

- Strongly disagree

- Disagree
- Mildly disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Mildly agree
- Agree
- Strongly disagree

35. In the future, I will actively seek out products/brands from the company whose brand community I follow on Facebook.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Mildly disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Mildly agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

36. I will purchase from the company whose brand community I follow on Facebook the next time I need a product it offers.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Mildly disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Mildly agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

37. Being part of a brand community I follow on Facebook has encouraged my level of commitment with the brand.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Mildly disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Mildly agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

38. I am proud to say to others that I am a customer of the company/brand whose brand community I follow on Facebook.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Mildly disagree

- Neither agree nor disagree
- Mildly agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

39. I strongly recommend buying products from this company/brand whose brand community I follow on Facebook.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Mildly disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Mildly agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

40. I mostly say positive thing about this company/brand whose brand community I follow on Facebook.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Mildly disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Mildly agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

41. I have spoken favourably to others about this company/brand whose brand community I follow on Facebook.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Mildly disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Mildly agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

42. Being part of a brand community I follow on Facebook has encouraged my level of word of mouth activities about the brand.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Mildly disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Mildly agree
- Agree

- Strongly agree

Participants are kindly requested to complete the entire question to qualify for the next section.

This survey allows participants who complete this survey entirely a chance to win 15-pound Next gift voucher. You have an opportunity to become lucky winner among other four participants. Could you please provide your contact information (e.g., email, mobile number, twitter address, Instagram address, Facebook address etc.) so that you will be contacted if you make it among the five-lucky winner. The winner of the next gift voucher will be contacted by

Contact address: -----

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for filling out this survey.

Appendix: 3 Figure of main research question, objectives, and sub research questions.

